THE "BRIDGE PARTY" OF E.M. FORSTER'S

A PASSAGE TO INDIA: WHERE APOLLO AND KALI YEARN TO EMBRACE

FROM OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE GULF

By

Mark Undeberg

RECOMMENDED:

D. A. Bartlett

Mark A. Boyd

Advisory Committee Chair

Department Head

APPROVED:

Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Dean of the Graduate School

4-17-01

Date

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A

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Mark Undeberg, B.A.

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ABSTRACT

In 1978, Edward Said published Orientalism, a revolutionary study that invited new interpretations of literature and particularly of works written by Western authors about the East. Postcolonialist and feminist critics embraced many of Said's theories, including one that implies that the West equates the East with femininity and that such a view necessarily reveals the West's prejudice against both the East and with femininity in general.

This thesis does not argue the overall validity of Said's theories. Rather, it explores the treatment of "femininity" in E.M. Forster's A Passage to India with the aim of determining the validity of postcolonialist and feminist critiques of that novel. This study found that the femininity does not play a subservient role in the novel but that it is an essential half of an androgynous whole that Forster constructs as an ideal to promise hope in a troubled universe.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

When I first read A Passage to India, I was a teacher in Nepal, schooling the grandchildren of those Gurkhas who played such a prominent role in the history of the British Raj. Indeed, I had seen each of Forster's characters, whether in the border towns of the plains or in that final outpost of the Raj, the Gurkha recruitment camp of Dharan—the portal by which some of my own students and friends fought Western wars with Eastern blood. As a teacher there, I learned far more than I ever taught, and perhaps the most valuable lesson regarded what it means to be human as opposed to what it means to be white or brown or yellow, Hindu or Muslim or Christian, or male or female or homosexual.

Having learned such a lesson in an environment that A Passage to India never fails to recall, I naturally approached the book, as I wish I could everything in life, with what I hope can be considered a holistic attitude. I believe that this study defends the value of such an attitude. For me, however, the most valuable aspect of expressing what I learned as a teacher is that the completion of this thesis will enable me to teach, hence learn, yet again.

I would like to thank the University of Alaska Fairbanks for allowing me to exercise my immense stubbornness through a course of study that can only be described as erratic. And as an institution is only as valuable as the people that it employs, I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude toward the individuals—

all of them former or current committee members—who most helped me complete this study.

Although I cannot presume that Dr. Katherine Stern would agree with this thesis, I would like to acknowledge that her insights on race, class, and gender helped to shape its message. I would like to thank Dr. D. A. Bartlett for lending her expertise rather late in the game. Her commentary on Indian religious texts was particularly valuable. My committee chair, Dr. Mark Box, worked very hard to ensure that this thesis maintained the standard of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. I thank him for his dedication to a cause that must have often appeared lost. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Roy Bird, without whose encouragement and personal interest and intervention this thesis would never have been completed.

INTRODUCTION

Lionel Trilling, in his 1943 study, E.M. Forster, concludes his critique of A Passage to India by remarking that "Forster's book is not about India alone; it is about all of human life" (161). This emphasis on the obvious, considering the eminence of the critic and the greatness of his subject, initially appears anticlimactic. Trilling, however, has the rare critical gift of not merely chipping diamonds from coal with a stroke of his pen, but, in the slight act of capping that pen, of polishing his gems to a lasting sheen. As early as 1943, he understood that the universality of A Passage to India—that expansive panorama of the human experience—would one day be dissected into politico-critical fiefdoms, each guarding the diminished horizons of its independence. As a reminder to future generations, Trilling's simplicity reveals a remarkable prescience.

We must recognize, of course, that Passage,[1] despite the broad appeal of its message and the international critical acclaim to which it was published, has always been a novel, like the colonialism it depicts, preoccupied by borders of one sort or another. To an extent, the critical response has been predictable. While Indians viewed Forster's masterpiece as the first English novel to portray their culture and humanity as "real" rather than as "romantic,"[2] English supporters of the Raj's

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[1] In keeping with convention, this thesis uses A Passage to India and Passage interchangeably.

[2] Judith Scherer Herz (31) and K. Natwar-Singh (48) comment on early Indian views on Forster's novel.

presence in Asia reviled the work as despicably false. While critical allegiances along nationalist and political lines have fluctuated with time, the most formidable border in the novel remains that space, real or imagined, which separates East from West.

"A Passage to India has no equal in the entire literature of the Raj. It is, at once, the last colonial and the first postcolonial text" (31). This perceptive remark by Judith Scherer Herz, though defining the novel as "colonial," does not, most commendably, insist that the novel ally itself with either side of the imperialist question. The location of the East-West boundary, a border we must at least approach, is here appropriately consigned to the text and its reader, rather than defined by the novel's proximity to either the "colonial" or "postcolonial" sections of the literary elite's libraries.

Unfortunately, the balanced perspective of Herz's statement voices, in the context of contemporary "postcolonial" literary exegesis, a minority opinion. More regrettably, what is arguably Forster's masterpiece has been increasingly and unabashedly categorized as "Orientalist" literature—the sub-genre that Edward Said and his followers condemn as degrading to the East. Said, in his revolutionary study Orientalism, remarks of Orientalist literature that

> We are left at the end [of Orientalist texts] with a sense of the pathetic distance still separating 'us' from an Orient destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its permanent estrangement from the West.

> This is the disappointing conclusion corroborated (contemporaneously) by the ending of E.M. Forster's A Passage to India, where Aziz and Fielding attempt, and fail at, reconciliation. (244)

While Said is not the first critic to read a negative message into the conclusion of the novel, his inclusion of that reading as an argument furthering his own theories on Orientalism has had an impact out of proportion to perhaps even his intent. Certainly, the issues presented in Orientalism have served to politicize recent interpretations of Forster's masterpiece. The difference is a matter of agenda. While early historical readings of Passage frequently focus on its anti-imperialist message, Said ultimately sees the text as a form of literary imperialism.

There is a historical irony in the fact that Said marks the quality of "estrangement" in the novel that, perhaps more than any other work of literature, accelerated the demise of the Raj in India, leading to a political environment in which the word "equality" has had some meaning.[3] There is further irony evident in Said's citation of the final paragraph of Passage as a "compact definition"—a formula to keep East and West at bay—when Said's distillation of the meaning of Forster's novel into that same final paragraph, itself constitutes a "compact definition."

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[3] Herz (35) writes that many reviewers considered the novel to be a political document. Natwar-Singh (50) and Lewis in E.M. Forster's Passages to India (109) comment on the influence the novel had in changing both personal and governmental viewpoints on India and on Britain's right to rule the subcontinent.

Said's disappointment with Passage apparently arises from the fact that the "hundred voices" of Mau, in harmony with the sky, say, "No, not yet…No, not there" (362). If Said, in furthering his argument, must ignore the first 361 pages of an extremely complex work, he, at the very least, could have asked if "not yet" then "when?"; if "not there" then "where?" These questions are, of course, precisely the ones that Forster wishes his reader to articulate. As with Trilling's simplicity, these slight phrases voiced by the spirit of Mau are not careless spatters of ink. With them, Forster leaves the question of humanity, and British India's place in it, to the reader. More importantly, should we accept his invitation, Forster provides us with the means to solve the mysteries that he has created.

By his indiscriminate judgment on the final paragraph of Forster's work, Said, in effect, exposes every aspect of the novel to the incriminations of anti-Orientalist theory.[4] Nor, in fairness to Said, is he necessarily entirely mistaken in his censure. We must consider that Forster, despite the apparent objectivity of his narrative, remains a product of the Western tradition. As such, according to Said's theories, Forster cannot fail but somehow to "create" an Orient that reflects his world. The accuracy and validity of these theories, however, must be considered. Said, rather paradoxically, states: "For students of literature, Orientalism offers a marvelous instance of the interrelations between society and history through

[4] Fifteen years after the publication of Orientalism, Said amends his opinion of Passage's conclusion in Culture and Imperialism (201). His revised opinion, and the issues that it raises, will be briefly discussed in the next section of this thesis.

textuality" (Orientalism 24). A Passage to India, however, is in itself a marvelous study of the interrelations between society and history through textuality; simply because Forster dares to cross borders, it does not mean that he is guilty of Said's brand of Orientalism.

Forster was unquestionably aware of the moral responsibilities attendant on writing about the Other, particularly in the rather tense time of the Raj as he knew it. If Forster can be said to simplify the East, the same can be said of his treatment of the West. The reader would do well, as would have Said, to consider Mrs. Moore's ruminations following Heaslop's criticism of Aziz's behavior at the mosque. Forster, through Mrs. Moore, has just confirmed an Orientalist stereotype. Mrs. Moore's concluding thought, however, is "Yes, it was all true, but how false a summary of the man; the essential life of him had been slain" (34). The message for us is that, yes, we can join Said and his followers in categorizing and condemning Forster as an Orientalist, but only if we are unconcerned about slaying the essential life of his work.

Eminent Orientalist Bernard Lewis writes that Said relies on a number of unscholarly "devices" by which to further his arguments. "One," says Lewis, "is the reinterpretation of the passages he cites to an extent out of all reasonable accord with their authors' manifest intentions" (112).[5] Forster's novel certainly falls victim to

[5] This study does not view authorial intention as the preeminent means of critical discourse. However, this paper does contend that political criticism is based on the study of specific historical occurrences that bring about a political situation worthy of debate. In this context, then, the value of

this method of reinterpretation. While Lewis alleges that Said is guilty of a number of such machinations, this paper cannot aspire to a comprehensive study of the question of Orientalism. It can, however, add to meaningful scholarly debate by exploring in depth one of the themes that Said and Lewis, in their frequent verbal bouts, only touch upon—the question of the East's alleged femininity in the Western imagination and particularly as that theme applies to criticism of Forster's work. Lewis, referring to Orientalism, accurately points out that "The theme of violent seizure and possession, with sexual overtones, recurs at several points in the book" (111). In the same passage, Lewis rather curtly dismisses Said's opinions as "projected sexual fantasies." Said's preoccupation with the West's vision of the East as feminine is still more strongly defined in his 1985 article "Orientalism Reconsidered":

> Thus, for example, we can see that Orientalism is a praxis of the same sort, albeit in different territories, as male gender dominance, or patriarchy, in metropolitan societies: the Orient was routinely described as feminine, its riches as fertile, its main symbols the sensual woman, the harem, and the despotic—but curiously attractive ruler. (103)

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political criticism can be severely limited if it does not accord the author's remarks the same degree of historical significance that it accords other historical events.

In Passage, however, the only despotic rulers are the British, and they are not at all attractive. As for the harem, Forster does his best to demystify that symbol, and to envision Forster's female characters as sensual would take a good deal more imagination than responsible criticism would sanction. The question of gender, however, remains fundamental to the novel; its exploration shapes the thesis of this paper.

This study examines Forster's profound vision of gender. It exposes the post-Saidan model—in which continents and their peoples are engendered, embattled, and permanently embittered—as an inadequate construct by which to explore the genius of A Passage to India. This study finds that femininity, whether as a quality of the novel's characters or as a symbol of the East, does not play a subservient role in the novel; it reveals, in fact, that the ultimate message of Forster's masterpiece is about union rather than about separation. By redefining masculine/feminine iconography, Forster blends not only genders but also cultures and the religious, racial, and social traits associated with them.

With respect to a secondary thesis—an originally unintended but inevitable outcome of exploring the novel under the stated terms—this paper necessarily arrives at conclusions regarding the validity of what it terms "political criticism." Significantly, the idea that individual feeling supersedes the political body is a distinct theme throughout Passage, and, as such, a critique of institutionalized criticism is in harmony with the principal purpose of this study.

While this study agrees with Said's opinion that the West has feminized the East, there are a number of fundamental problems in the application of his theories to Orientalist discourse. First, the feminization of conquered peoples is certainly not a trait that is unique to East/West interaction. More importantly, India has historically feminized herself.[6] In short, the contemporary Western critical insistence that to feminize is to denigrate is, in fact, to some measure complicit with what it purports to oppose.

On the one hand, it is quite likely that Forster's relatively limited exposure to Indian Woman, due to cultural rather than personal inclination, initially limited his ability to create compelling Indian female characters. On the other hand, as one reads the novel, it becomes increasingly clear that Forster's engendering of continents, cultures, and religions enables him to create a narrative structure, based on mythology, that is indeed the only structure that can accommodate the scope of his message. To the Orientalist, to feminize is to make weak; to Forster, to feminize is to make strong.

While this study contends that Passage is about commonality and reconciliation, the novel admittedly lends itself, on some levels, to rational critical dialogue grounded in the political. Where critics originally squared off across the relatively clean lines of the East-West boundary, Said's Orientalism paved the way

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[6] In Hindu Goddesses, David Kinsley notes: "Independent India still cultivates this theme of the motherland as a goddess" (183). Not only does India feminize herself, the sense of that femininity is one of great power.

to new territorial claims based on race, class, and gender. The boundaries become less marked, the issues more numerous and complex. Given this complexity, the following section of this thesis provides the background necessary to support its interpretation of the text. Presented as "Several Histories," the section essentially considers two perspectives—the literary world's views of Forster and Forster's vision of the world.

SEVERAL HISTORIES

Lengthy interpretations of A Passage to India frequently include a historical outline by which readers might temporally orient themselves to appreciate the novel better. These histories, however, are usually limited to a listing of the major events in the story of the British Raj, a fact that reinforces the erroneous notion that the book is predominantly a novel concerned with colonialism. Robin Winks and James Rush underscore the first of several complexities that scholars face when critiquing Passage. "How often," they write, "does one hear the conventional wisdom that Passage to India is the 'first book on India' ever written by a Westerner when the book is in a fundamental sense not about India at all" (2). Critics work from the premise that great works of literature "go beyond" the apparent. Indeed, critics have value only if that premise is correct. This thesis contends that the novel is only slightly concerned with the political. The Raj, then, must be viewed as a setting for the revelation of larger things; it should not act as a restraint on the meaning of the novel.

The Raj, of course, does have importance, but less for its uniqueness than for what it shared and shares with every other era in history. While Forster was glad of the novel's ability to effect social change, he also clearly stated that he did not write it for the express purpose of undermining the Raj. In a 1962 interview, Forster recalled that Passage "had some political influence—it caused people to think of the

link between India and Britain and to doubt if that link was altogether of a healthy nature. The influence (political) was not intended; I was interested in the story and the characters. But I welcomed it" (qtd. in Natwar-Singh 50). Forster's vision was not focused on any one particular movement in history; rather, history becomes a timeless setting in which human beings reenact the past, suffering the same illusions and clinging to the same hopes as their predecessors, regardless of race, class, gender, or religion.

CRITICAL VIEWS ON FORSTER

Concerned with contemporary perspectives on the historical, this paper primarily discusses feminist and postcolonialist criticism as these schools currently dominate critical discourse on A Passage to India. The instinctive respect that one feels for these schools must be tempered by the fact that what elevates the status of the individual feminist or postcolonialist does not necessarily elevate the status of women in general or of those once colonized.

The difficulty in discussing the feminist perspective is that, on many levels, it does not exist. The illusion of feminist unity is the natural result of its legitimate struggle to find a voice. The tragedy of that illusion is that feminism has too often sought dimensions that appear solid by posing at a distance from the equally tragic illusion of what has been designated "masculinity." This us/them pattern applies equally well to the postcolonialists. There are colonizers and the colonized, the

oppressors and the oppressed, and political criticism, far more than the fiction it critiques, isolates one from the other. This critical stress on opposites destroys any sense of complicity, any sense of responsibility, any sense of a shared human penchant for suffering and joy. We lose sight of the expanses of gray that lie between every pair of opposites to which we cling to ease our sense of insecurity—good and evil, man and woman, black and white.

A Passage to India is, perhaps above all, an exploration of gray spaces, "places" with little identity or affiliation. This fact has troubled the interpretations of every school since the novel was published, but it presents unique problems for those schools—whether feminist, postcolonialist, or of a more traditional persuasion—whose existence depends on a readership with a very defined set of political values.

This study contends that political platforms make questionable springboards for literary exegesis. This is not to say that politics and literature have no common ground; it is to say that there is a significant difference between arriving at a political point by way of an objective ride through the text and driving through the text on a political vehicle. The latter does not admit to a full view of the scenery, and it is this landscape that is designated by "diminished horizons."

The "diminished horizons" of John Bull colonialism and literary commentary having been adequately addressed in the past few decades, critical debate must naturally explore contemporary boundaries. This critical history, then, begins with the feminist response to the novel and continues into the anti-colonialist present. It is

by no means comprehensive but highlights those statements and theories that have shaped the debate surrounding Passage, and particularly the debate that equates India with violated femininity. As a critical overview, it focuses on that landscape most often designated as feminine—the Caves.

Brenda Silver points out one of the central themes of Forster's creations. She writes "That Forster used his fiction to explore and expose prevailing sexual attitudes is a commonplace" (87). The concept of sexuality and gender, however, alters with social change, and critical analysis of Forster's work has consistently echoed this relationship. Regardless of school or era, every in-depth criticism of the novel has been forced to deal with what happened to Adela in the Caves. The prevailing opinion has altered considerably over the years. Initially, in the context of sexual discourse, the Caves represented Adela's "sexual, repressed frame of mind" (Finkelstein 130). Adela, in other words, had a psychotic episode, and the rape was a product of her imagination. In this reading, Aziz is the victim, and there can be little question of the two sharing that status. Aziz is indignant; Adela is silenced.

Empowered by the early feminist movement, however, Adela gained something of a voice and, in time, the "rape" became real. At this point, Adela becomes the victim and Aziz the villain. Until this point, the lines between good and evil remain clear. Their roles have been reversed, but there is little confusion about who is right or wrong, depending on which theory the reader embraces.

With the advent of race and gender as a somewhat unified critical tool, however, the issue of sexuality in Passage begins to become unmanageably complex. In this situation, native man and white woman are usually depicted as victims of the white patriarchy. For many works, this can be a legitimate and effective approach, but Forster's work does not even marginally accommodate it, and the result has been a confusion not yet resolved by those who promote this type of criticism:

> The ambiguities surrounding the alleged rape thus force the critic to defend either the native man or the white woman against his or her opponent. It is this either/or decision (but never both) that has divided an anticolonial criticism of A Passage to India along gender lines. (Sharpe 26)

This drawing of lines in the sand, the traditional mode of critical dueling, suddenly becomes a standoff from which seemingly no critic can withdraw intact. The inadequacy of this either/or approach, evident in any context, is particularly obvious in an attempted interpretation of Passage. For, despite appearances, Forster writes not so much of the differences between races and genders, but rather with the problems encountered when individuals or communities recognize their similarities with the Other. Forster's greatest novel, particularly regarding the issues of gender and/or sexuality, is not about lines that diverge, but about lines that intersect.

There is, unfortunately, very little to gain by the feminist who would follow these lines to their vertex. For the legitimacy of feminism requires that it take a

stance that is somehow distanced from that which has been designated as masculine. The politics of feminism do not, at this point in history, permit an androgynous reading of Passage, any more than the proponents of John Bull did when the novel first appeared.

The politics of criticism do not end with the dilemma that Sharpe outlined above. Brenda Silver reveals, once again, the difficulties inherent in conducting East-West discourse. She states: "I am also aware of the dangers of 'feeling privileged as a woman' [underlined for original emphasis] to speak to and for third-world women…where the other woman cannot speak for herself" (88-89). In fact, Eastern Woman is quite capable of speaking for herself, as Zakia Pathak and her "Other Woman" colleagues do in their article "The Prisonhouse of Orientalism," and to deny that ability, however graciously articulated, is an imperialistic stance in itself. In exposing critics like Silver, Pathak and company add yet another complexity by stating that they "find Said's assessment of western notions about oriental sexuality inflected by gender bias" (197-98).

In many ways, the debate comes full circle in 1993 when Said appears to amend his opinion of the novel's conclusion. In Culture and Imperialism he writes:

> Yet he [Fielding] and Aziz—a Muslim nationalist—ride together *and* remain apart: "'They didn't want it,' they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not here.'" There is resolution and union, but neither is complete. (200)

On the one hand Said is completely correct when he states that the union is not complete. The instance of final resolution can only take place in the reader's mind—in those intangibles that he or she takes from the novel and applies to life. Passage is an invitation to explore and to hope; it is not a political problem to be solved. In the end, Said gets the message right, but unfortunately that message, for him, remains solely in the political arena. For Said, "the political conflict will simply be resolved in the future" (Culture 201).

Unfortunately, the political precedent that Said set in 1978 can never be resolved because the landscape of politics continually alters. O'Flaherty writes:

> In an attempt to undo the damage done by centuries of scholarship motivated by colonial and missionary hatred (or loathing) of non-Western religions, the scholarship of recent decades has leaned over backwards and fallen into awkward position of cultural relativism. (18)

O'Flaherty's comments on religion are equally true of politics; in fact, the two are frequently one and the same entity. Concerning Passage, cultural relativism has broken down into gender, color, and caste relativism. In Women Writing in India, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita highlight this ongoing political fragmentation of humanity in the literary sphere: "Middle-class women, white women, upper-caste Hindu women might find their claims to 'equality' or to the 'full authority' of liberal

individualism are at the expense of the working class, the nonwhite races, dalits, or Muslims" (35).

To recognize and aid victims of political oppression is both a worthy cause and a duty; to nurture a culture of victimization is to invite some of the less appealing chapters in history to repeat themselves. In the 1990's and on Indian soil, this culture of victimization went horribly beyond the theoretical when several high-caste Hindu youths—young people from a traditionally privileged background—immolated themselves in protest of an affirmative action plan (Wolpert 437). What, we must ask, does "victim" define?

In the end, one draws parallels to the dilemma faced by Mr. Sorley, one of the missionaries portrayed in Forster's novel. Confronted with the question of who or what will enter the Christian heaven, Sorley stresses that all humans will certainly be welcomed. He accepts the possibility that monkeys will be allowed, he becomes uneasy when wasps are mentioned, and he draws the line at bacteria. The narrator concludes that "We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing" (37-38). Forster's point is that structures, whether religious or political, invariably exclude, and the "heaven" that they promise is consequently impoverished.

This study recognizes, as did Forster, that politics is an acceptable and necessary response to social injustice; it also recognizes, as does Passage, that politics rarely constitutes an enlightened response to the overall human predicament.

Forster's novel is about the individual and the grace, or lack thereof, with which he or she connects to his or her surroundings.

The Forsterian Vision of the World

When Mulk Raj Anand published Untouchable in 1935, Forster wrote its preface. Forster's admiration for Anand is clear, and a reading of Anand's novel reveals a philosophical, if not artistic, sympathy between the two authors. One statement in particular, as it relates to Forster's handling of history in Passage, is striking: "As you all know, while we are asking for freedom from the grip of a foreign nation, we have ourselves, for centuries, trampled underfoot millions of human beings without feeling the slightest remorse for our iniquity" (146). In a single sentence, Anand, through the words of a fictional Mahatma Gandhi, captures the dilemma inherent in the politicizing of morality. On the one hand, Gandhi (both fictional and real), Anand, and Forster recognize that the Raj is a corrupt form of human expression—a form that must be resisted. On the other hand, they all realize that the Raj is only one stage in a series of human failures—failures that have always been and that yet show few signs of aging.

Guided by this classical view of history, Forster creates a world that both captures the past and projects the future—a world in which opposites are brought together, never completely, but closely enough to inspire hope. His approach is not by chance but is the result of the experiences of a full life. The remainder of this

section briefly explores the personal inclinations and scholarly efforts that result in this vision of Forster.

Personal Inclinations

While this thesis is not predominantly a study of authorial intent, it does contend that to ignore totally the personal inclinations of Forster, or any author, is to limit the value of criticism.[7] Forster makes a number of succinct comments on the meaning of Passage, and the statement that perhaps best points us toward discovery reads: "I tried to indicate the human predicament in a universe which is not, so far, comprehensible to our minds" (qtd. in Rau 105).

A study of the incomprehensible effectively removes the equation of "antagonistic principles." It forces the reader, particularly the critic, into a role that he or she, according to Marguerite Yourcenar, is poorly prepared to assume. Yourcenar writes: "Surely one of the irreparable mistakes of the West has been to conceptualize the complex human substance under the antithetical form of body-soul and then to escape from this antithesis only by denying the soul" (188).[8]

A study of the incomprehensible removes those clear lines of battle across which critics love to wage verbal war. While the contemporary critical arena has

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[7] "Authorial intent" is not synonymous with "personal inclinations." This study is not so concerned with what Forster intended as with what was his deepest message. The research behind this thesis proves that his personal inclinations prepared him to write in a way that was consistent with what his declared intent was. This consistency should be viewed as a satisfying coincidence rather than as a testimonial for authorial intent.

[8] Yourcenar makes this statement in an essay on Tantrism, the Eastern discipline that allows for the attainment of perfection/liberation through the practice of a combination of sexual and mental

sought comprehension along political lines, critical scorn for the intangible has a storied history. Perhaps one way to know Forster as author is to examine him as critic. Trilling notes that Forster is an "impressionistic critic" (165)—a critic who, if we accept Anatole France's definition, "tells the adventures of his soul among masterpieces" (qtd. in Hornstein 266). For the most part, Trilling views this "impressionistic" strain in Forster as a liability in critical terms. Trilling understands, though, that Forster's critical approach "is *consciously* a contradiction of the Western tradition of intellect which believes that by making decisions, by choosing precisely, by evaluating correctly it can solve all difficulties" (173).

In short, Forster scorns intellect in favor of the soul. Virginia Woolf also highlights this quality in Forster, as novelist rather than as critic, when she writes that "…his message is addressed to the soul" (qtd. in Dolin 336). Forster's embrace of the intangible makes a complete exploration of the novel virtually impossible for the political critic who must shed ideology and its logic to enter Forster's world and consider the soul.

The Classical View

This section briefly explores the life and scholarly experiences that enable Forster to consider intangibles so profoundly—to create commonality from disparity and to meld opposites. Forster's life experience—his stays in India, the people he

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exercises. Her point—one seconded by this thesis—is that the West has little tradition on which to draw when opposites must be envisioned as one.

had known, the books he had read—are well documented elsewhere.[9] However, the reader needs to be reminded of the fact that Forster was not writing from a vacuum and that his knowledge of India should not be taken for granted.

One aspect of Forster's scholarly experience that requires further introductory discussion is his knowledge of the Classics.[10] Forster studied the Classics for four years at Cambridge. One of Forster's tutors, Nathaniel Wedd, inspired Forster in a way that would have an effect on his later writings. Lewis declares that "Wedd ignited Forster's passion for ancient Greece" (E.M Forster's Passages 6) and that "Italy and Greece remained his favorite countries, and this preference is reflected in the preponderance of classical settings in his novels and short stories of the period" (7). Lionel Trilling has an even stronger opinion of the classical influence on Forster, writing that "Forster expresses all modern life in terms of Greek mythology" (56).

This preoccupation with the classical would seem to have little bearing on the creation of Passage until one considers that Forster consciously drew parallels between India and the Western classical world. In his novel, Forster writes that "To regard an Indian as if he were an Italian is not, for instance, a common error, nor perhaps a fatal one, and Fielding often attempted analogies between this peninsula

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[9] Adwaita P. Ganguly's India: Mystic, Complex, and Real contains an excellent summary of Forster's knowledge and experience in chapter 2, "Forster's Sources and Methods."

[10] In this thesis, reference to the classical is not intended to encompass all individual philosophies or ideas of the classical era. Rather, it is intended to refer to the myths and legends that poets such as Homer immortalized.

and that other, smaller and more exquisitely shaped, that stretches into the classic waters of the Mediterranean" (64). This comparison of the two peninsulas defies logic unless one understands that what is being compared is really the classicism of East and West—with its emphasis on mythology and the symbolic.

As a bridge between *The Classical View* and the two following sections, *Religion and Mythology* and *The Androgynous Vision*, the writings of Carolyn Heilbrun and Marguerite Yourcenar lend insight into why Forster's love for the classics becomes such a powerful instrument of expression. If we revisit, from the classical perspective, Yourcenar's comments about the Western separation of body and soul, we see that, in both Eastern and Western mythology, god has not quite been sundered from man. Odysseus can still touch and talk to the gods much as Arjuna debates Krishna before the great battle in The Bhagavad-Gita.[11]

In mythology, god and human still share common ground. In mythology, as well, man and woman have not yet been so irrevocably split. In Toward a Recognition of Androgyny, Heilbrun writes: "If we look at Greek literature with an eye for androgyny, we see more than the great prevalence of central women characters, though that is remarkable enough. We see also a celebration of the 'feminine' impulse, of androgynous roles for the women characters" (9).[12] While we

[11] While a Christian might argue that God appears in Christ, such an incarnation is clearly a holdover from mythological times. The sense of physical separation between monotheistic gods and humans is far more pronounced than it is between pagan gods and their human charges.

[12] Heilbrun cites the following authors and works in support of her statement: Sophocles (*Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Oedipus Colonus*), Euripides (*Medea, Alcestis*, and *The Trojan Women*),

cannot determine that Forster is motivated by precisely the same sources that Yourcenar and Heilbrun[13] are, we can determine that Forster uses mythology and androgyny to create synergy between East and West.

We can also determine that the history of mythology provides adequate evidence that the concept of androgyny played a strong role in the development of both Eastern and Western cultures and that the theme of androgyny appeared in literature that expressed these cultures. According to Mircea Eliade and Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, androgynes were an important theme in both the ancient Indo-European culture and in Greek culture. These authors cite the Vedic "Sky-Earth" androgyne and Plato's allegory of Aristophanes as examples of early East-West exploration of the principle of androgyny (Eliade 278-80).

Religion and Mythology

Bloom is not alone when he writes that Passage "seems a strikingly religious book" (2-3). Virginia Woolf goes so far as to say: "Mr. Forster has almost achieved the great feat of animating this dense, compact body of observation with a spiritual light" (351). In fact, at least ten distinct religions are mentioned in the text. Religion, in short, is the main vehicle for Forster's message.

Aristophanes (*Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*), and Plato (Aristophanes's allegory of the androgynes in *Symposium*).

[13] Note, however, that Forster's first-year Cambridge reading list included Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and Plato.

In the novel, however, the exploration of religion and mythology presents some daunting problems. On the one hand, "religion," as a set of distinct systems of belief, accentuates those divisions that Forster works to reconcile. On the other hand, the symbolism that mythology provides helps to break down the divisions created by narrower, more dogmatic views of religion. In many ways, Forster views mythology much as Roland Barthes does in Mythologies. Barthes writes: "Ancient or not, mythology can only have a historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things" (110).

This thesis has already observed Forster's fascination with the Western classics, as well as his tendency to compare India to Italy. The reader should not be surprised to find Forster operating on the level of the mythological in regard to Hinduism. In Other People's Myths, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty writes how she began to replace Jewish myths with Hindu myths after, as a child, she read A Passage to India (13). She mentions Forster several times in her work, and it is clear that she feels a certain affinity with him. Her obvious sympathy for Forster, however, still does not quite prepare us for the following statement--a statement that brilliantly captures the essence of Forster's work: "I believe that we can, that it is possible to construct (or to discover) a metamyth (or a meta-metamyth) by reflecting not merely upon the classical themes of our own tradition but upon the classical themes of other people's traditions" (139). A Passage to India is just such a metamyth.

The use of myth to interpret the novel is not a new idea. As early as 1964 Ellen Horowitz writes that "The specific problems raised by A Passage to India suggest that it can be profitably interpreted within the context of myth and ritual" (71). Unfortunately, Horowitz does little more than "suggest" an interpretation rather than engage in the type of comprehensive mythological exegesis that the novel requires.

The point of departure for this study lies in recognizing Forster's attraction to Hinduism. "I think, perhaps, after all," writes Forster, "the Hindus took in more of the facts in their religion than most people have done" (qtd. in Brander 198). Trilling wisely points out that it is unlikely that Forster literally believed in Hinduism, but he goes on to say that "...Forster has always had a strong tendency to 'accept' the universe and in a way that has some affinity with Hindu religious thought" (162).

And it is appropriate here to reflect on the somewhat heated debate that has occurred regarding whether Passage is a "Hindu book" or a "Muslim book." [14] This study contends that the book is overwhelmingly Hindu and that not to recognize the fact is to limit one's perception of the novel seriously. The reader will not be surprised, then, at the following sequence from Said's Culture and Imperialism:

> Forster emphasizes the muslims, compared with whom the Hindus (including Godbole) are peripheral, as if they were not amenable to novelistic treatment. Islam was closer to Western culture, standing in

[14] Herz summarizes this debate on page 47-48 of "A Passage to India": Nation and Narration.

> a median position to the English and the Hindus in Forster's Chandrapore. Forster is slightly nearer Islam than Hinduism in A Passage to India, but the final lack of sympathy is obvious. (202)

This passage underscores not the failure, by any means, of Orientalism but the failure of Said's application of that theory to Forster's novel. For Said is, as are many others, bound to a superficial reading of the text based on political concerns. Forster is not concerned with individual cultures but with human culture. If he lacks sympathy with Islam, the reader only need observe his lack of sympathy for the British to realize that he is working at something much larger than an invidious comparison of religious or ethnic cultures. Forster also lacks sympathy for individual Hindu characters, but the philosophy behind Hinduism—that from which he creates his metamyth—is unquestionably the very fiber from which his masterpiece is woven.

The importance of Hindu mythology to the novel will soon be readily apparent, and Forster's knowledge of Hindu mythology should not be taken for granted. We know that Forster read a wide range of books on Hinduism and that, as G.K. Das points out, he took detailed notes on the gods and goddesses of India (95).[15] And any introduction to Forster and Hindu mythology must begin with Lord Krishna, the god who brought Forster to declare himself on "nearer nodding terms

[15] Das goes on to note that many of these references are recorded in a "flippant and hilarious vein." This flippancy, however, supports this thesis in that it reveals how carefully Forster controlled his portrayal of Hinduism in the novel. Like Said, Das believes that Forster was more inclined to

with Krishna than with any other god" (qtd. in McDowell 110). Krishna, perhaps above all, represents synthesis, the union of opposites, and Forster is drawn to this power. And the range of what Krishna unifies, in symbolic terms, is enormous—he weaves together the loose ends of history, culture, and gender and creates calm out of chaos by making the irrational somehow rational.

An examination of Krishna as the hero of the Bhagavad-Gita begins to reveal the degree of Krishna's influence on Forster. The Gita, of course, is a section of the Mahabharata, one of the masterpieces of world literature and a work with which Forster was intimately acquainted. Natwar-Singh states that Forster analyzed the Gita in the essay "Hymn before Action" (54-55). Natwar-Singh also grasps what Forster finds compelling in the Gita, that "the fortunes of men are all bound together, and it is impossible to inflict damage without receiving it" (qtd. in Natwar-Singh 54-55). While this simplistic definition of *karma* appears to justify the action/reaction syndrome that perpetuates antagonistic principles, we must remember that Krishna counsels Arjuna on the battlefield and that this infliction of damage is chiefly metaphorical—meant to teach us not "an eye for an eye" but to teach us "not to pursue selfish interests at the expense of others but to contribute to life and consider the welfare of the whole" (Bhagavad-Gita xxix). Forster, much like Krishna, teaches on several levels. As the Gita is about far more than a battle, Passage is about far more than the Raj.

Islam than Hinduism. Forster might have felt closer to Islam than to Hinduism in social and aesthetic terms, but Islam has little to offer in terms of the message that Forster hoped to reveal in Passage.

We also need to be aware that Krishna historically—and for Forster symbolically—represents a bridge between cultures and their eras. As Stanley Wolpert writes, "The entire Ramayana may be read as an allegory of Aryan and pre-Aryan conflict…" (40). Forster, like Krishna, understands the futility that is ultimately inherent in taking sides. To do one's duty is one thing; to believe in that duty single-mindedly is quite another. For Forster, the injustice of the British Raj is self-evident, and this fact, not Said's Hindu characters, is peripheral to the novel. Forster recognizes, like K.R. Malkani, that "All such civilizational clashes have their share of glory and inglory, of violence and reconciliation, of thesis, antithesis and synthesis" (78). Forster, like Krishna, is concerned with synthesis, and to achieve it on the scale he desires he must, like Krishna, span historical eras and cultural attributes.

When considering the influence of Krishna and the Gita on the writing of Passage, we gain by examining one of Forster's contemporaries. Annie Besant, who dedicated much of her life to obtaining India's liberty, published her translation of the Gita in 1904. Ganguly notes that Besant "enlightened Forster on Hinduism" (29). In The Betrayal of Krishna, Krishna Chaitanya assesses Besant's thoughts on the Gita: "For Annie Besant, [the Gita] is not a Hindu text, nor even an Indian text, it is a mirror of the complex history of the world, a universal text that can be acclaimed by all nations; further, it is not a text to be just read, but one to be lived" (538). Forster, in subtle ways, brings much of the Gita to life in his novel.

Tharu and Lalita state that those writing in the "Orientalist framework" romanticized India's past by promoting the ideal of a Vedic/Aryan community. Tharu and Lalita also contend that Orientalist scholars downplayed literatures that "treated divine figures such as Radha or Krishna with familiarity or irreverence [because they] undermined traditional hierarchies of caste and gender" (10). Forster, ironically labeled Orientalist by precisely this type of scholarship, promotes not only Radha and Krishna but also their union.

In many ways that union resides in Krishna because of his androgynous nature. For Krishna is a bridge between historical eras, and, as a result of India's history, he is also a bridge between genders. Of Forster and Krishna, G.K. Das writes:

> Some of Forster's later accounts show that the complex legends associated with Krishna have a deeper appeal for his imagination. He sees that there are discrepancies in the many legends: "How is it that the warrior who drives Arjuna into battle and lectures him *en route* on the nature of the universe is also a dark-skinned cowboy who seduces hundreds of cowgirls?"—but the discrepancies are the result of an interesting mixture of two popular traditions of Krishna worship. (110)

As Das points out and Forster well knows, Arjuna's Krishna is of the Aryan/Vedic tradition, while the "dark-skinned cowboy" is of the pre-Aryan tradition. As a

reminder of Forster's ability to control classical symbolism, the following assessment of Dionysus by Thomas Rosenmeyer is remarkably similar to what Forster saw in Krishna:

> Dionysus, who is Euripides' embodiment of universal vitality, is described variously by chorus, herdsman, commoners, and princes. The descriptions do not tally, for the god cannot be defined....For one thing, Dionysus appears to be neither woman nor man; or, better, he presents himself as woman-in-man, or man-in-woman, the unlimited personality.... (qtd. in Heilbrun xi)

We know that Forster was very familiar with the "Bacchae" of Euripides[16] and, while we can only speculate on whether he read Rosenmeyer, there can be little doubt that Forster saw Dionysus's likeness in Krishna.

Krishna's androgyny, furthermore, is a clear reminder of the power of the goddess in the Hindu tradition. David Kinsley points out that "the emphasis on the feminine in later Hinduism is a survival or persistence of an indigenous, non-Aryan religiosity that has finally 'surfaced' in the Hindu tradition" (216). The result of this "surfacing," as Joseph Campbell points out in Oriental Mythology, is that the goddesses of the Hindu tradition have more power than the goddesses of any other major religious tradition in world history (160). Forster reveals this power if the reader approaches the novel with an open mind.

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[16] Page 239 and 297 of Nicola Beauman's E.M. Forster provide ample evidence of this fact.

The Androgynous Vision

This paper has already pointed out how critical analysis has widened rather than reconciled the gap between East and West. Said himself deplores this rift even as he identifies it. "Can one," he asks in Orientalism, "divide human reality…into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?" (45). Can one, Forster adds to the mix, divide human reality into clearly different genders? His answer is a resounding "No!" In fact, Forster resolves Said's question using the most fundamental division of all—gender.

While some critics have recognized the importance of androgyny to the study of literature, the acceptance of interpretations based on a recognition of androgyny has been severely hindered by the contemporary critical climate previously outlined in this thesis. In a 1973 work, Carolyn G. Heilbrun writes:

> The ideal toward which I believe we should move is best described by the term "androgyny." This ancient Greek word—from andro (male) and gyn (female)—defines a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned. Androgyny seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate. (X)

Besides defining the aim of androgyny, clearly relevant to Forster, Heilbrun also records her belief that the Greek classics present us with "a celebration of the 'feminine impulse' (5), an indication, perhaps, of why Forster was so drawn to the

classical view. While lamenting the scarcity of critics with an androgynous eye, Heilbrun postulates that women of her era have not embraced the concept of androgyny because they have too recently been given the power to express their femininity (190).

Sixteen years after the publication of Heilbrun's book, Josephine Donovan expresses views on androgyny that are remarkably similar to Heilbrun's. She writes: "Many of the contributors to this volume see the concept of androgyny as an important paradigm that feminist and humanist critics will be assuming in future work" (76). Despite this declaration, the fact remains that contemporary politics obscure what Finkelstein was able to recognize decades ago—that Forster's "humanist, androgynous vision remains radical fifty [now seventy-five] years after he wrote his last novel" (viii).

In seeking the origins and meaning behind Forster's radical vision, the reader should consider Forster's association with the Bloomsbury Group, a collection of individuals who constantly explored, both in fiction and life, the boundaries associated with gender. Virginia Woolf's observations lend a great deal to this discussion. Concerning Forster's achievement in Passage she writes that "it seems as if the double vision which troubled us in the earlier books was in process of becoming single" (351). For Virginia Woolf, the single vision is the androgynous vision, the expression that occurs when writers "harmonize the masculine and feminine approaches to truth" (Bazin 3). On one level, we see Forster's affinity with

this type of androgynous vision so prevalent in the Bloomsbury Group; on another level, we see that Forster's affinity with and treatment of Hinduism, in a novel set in India, providing him with an unusually powerful means of expression.

Given the tendency to sexual exploration common in the Bloomsbury Group, it is appropriate to consider that perhaps a direct correlation exists between homosexuality or sexual liberation and the androgynous vision. Bazin writes of Woolf that "her interest in what it means to be a male or a female was related to her quest for the self or the point of balance that would stabilize her personality and give her the sense of wholeness and unconsciousness which characterizes the androgynous writer" (3-4).

Selig writes that Passage "is far too universal to be labeled homosexual" (486). While this thesis agrees with Selig's assessment, it also recognizes the value in Francis King's declaration that Forster "was obliged to find a whole series of metaphors for his real sexual preoccupations and it is in these metaphors that so much of the power of his writing resides" (113). In many ways, Hindu mythology—Forster's metamyth—becomes the perfect metaphor for expression.

As the final word on what Forster's homosexuality could mean to the creation of Passage, John Stoltenberg's theories offer insights that must be considered. Stoltenberg writes that human beings are never merely simply XX or XY, but that we come in "a long list of mosaic variations" (26) that make us, in terms of gender, far more complex than the traditional either/or attribute that human

genitalia would assign to us. Forster is, without a doubt, a very complex mosaic who, in his work, creates a very complex mosaic.

The androgynous must be considered in any interpretation of Passage. Not only is it a vision—a way of seeing—it also becomes a way of creating. As with every aspect of the novel, the androgynous exhibits itself on many levels. In the larger sense of androgyny, Forster simply brings opposites together. In the narrower sense of androgyny, Forster blends the feminine and the masculine both within and between characters. The overall result is a message about union rather than separation.

"Only Connect"

In Forster, we see a human being whose personal inclinations, academic background, friendships, and perhaps even his genetic makeup leave him remarkably poised to craft a work that is still far ahead of its time. In assessing Passage and its author, the reader needs to keep in mind that the novel is also an exploration for Forster. The novel has little of the certainty ascribed to Orientalist literature. Rather than a display of conviction, Passage is a search for it. Forster's own struggle for comprehension makes him captive even as he commands. In many ways he is tentative as he explores, and it is the depth of his uncertainty, coupled with his hope to understand that uncertainty, that makes the novel such a compelling work of art.

Let Ellen Horowitz's succinct assessment of Forster serve as a portal to an androgynous interpretation of the novel. Forster, she writes, "creates his novels out

of antithesis, seeking resolution. Man's tragic division is his prevailing theme and if he has a credo it must be the 'Only Connect' motto of Howard's End" (70).

A HUMANIST READING

MOSQUE

Masculinity, Femininity, and Androgyny

The word "Mosque," in and of itself, invokes a powerful image. The word takes on added significance when viewed as part of a narrative landscape that includes "Caves" and "Temple." The three-part format of Passage has rightly generated a great deal of critical comment. "Mosque," "Caves," and "Temple," as Herz points out, have been equated with earth, air, and water; emotion, intellect, and love; reason, form, and sense; thesis, antithesis, and synthesis; goodness, passion, and darkness; and earth, sky, and water (57-58). This reading, however, contends that the three parts represent masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. "Mosque"—the symbol of the latest, perhaps most patriarchal of that patriarchal genealogy of religion that made god, in some cases literally, the Father—represents masculinity. "Caves" represents femininity, and "Temple," of course, points us toward Hinduism—that world religion whose mythology most clearly androgynizes genders.

Forster certainly discusses femininity in Mosque and masculinity in Caves, but much of this feminine/masculine dialogue should be recognized as a part of what Trilling calls the "reticulation of echoes" in a book "contrived of echoes" (155). In the first two parts of the novel, these feminine/masculine "echoes" are distant from each other and, in some instances, from the reader. In the third part of the novel the

"echoes" draw together, and the message is close enough and clear enough to create resolution.

Chapter I

One of the major difficulties in interpreting Passage is that these "echoes" call to the reader on many levels. The first chapter of the novel, for example, presents us with virtually a microcosm of those issues destined for resolution. The conflict, however, is not presented as a simple equation; in fact, it is scarcely evident at first glance. An in-depth reading of the first chapter sets the reader on the road to discovery.

The complexity of Forster's presentation becomes evident in the early paragraphs of the novel when the narrator challenges the reader with his first description of India: "The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil" (4).

As an isolated sentence, the severity of this introduction to India would seem to support the post-colonialist view that Forster somehow desires to belittle the East. In Passage, however, the critic who focuses on the obvious is sure to miss the message. For in the following paragraph, Forster marches the reader upward and inland past the houses of the Eurasians—already hinting at the divisions that plague humankind—to arrive at the civil station where the city below, formerly made of

mud, becomes "a tropical pleasaunce washed by a noble river" (4). During this short journey, Forster not only introduces the idea of class and caste, but he also recognizes what will become, decades later, one of the main tenets of what will be termed Orientalism—the West's romantic vision of the East, a notion so stubbornly maintained that the English must be driven down from the rise "to what passes below…to acquire disillusionment" (4-5).

As the city turns from mud to pleasaunce and back to mud, the narrator invites us to consider that reality is a matter of perception and that, until we broaden our horizons, perceptions will always create divisions. The ability to understand the novel hinges on the reader's willingness to embrace the narrator—this entity that speaks with such conviction that we are inclined to take him at face value. Until the reader befriends this storyteller, hangs on the lilt of his voice and dwells on the meaning of his moodiness—his cynicism, coyness, doubts, introspection, and poetry—an interpretation of Passage always falls short of the mark.[17]

The efficiency and style of Forster's prose are too often taken for granted, but a number of critics have grasped the significance of Forster's gift—a gift that allows him to move us from the simple through the sublime and back, where he lands us gently and with only an impression, rather than a rational view, that we ever left. One of Forster's narrative voices is, quite simply, the voice of poetry, and this in a work where the subject of poetry plays no small role. Trilling, out of respect for

[17] Indeed, Trilling argues that Forster's prose is one of the novel's characters (34).

what prose can achieve, dislikes using the word "poetry" as a descriptor of Forster's narrative talent (34), but this objection is simply a matter of semantics. Forster's gift, in fact, has been described in poetic terms, in dramatic terms (Brander 174), and in musical terms.[18]

Whether we designate Forster's voice shifts as rhythm or key is not nearly so important as that we realize that these shifts exist. As poetry or music, their interpretation can be problematic unless we not only recognize that these shifts occur but that we also attribute meaning to their existence. O'Flaherty, once again, offers valuable insight on what surely motivates parts of Forster's narration. "Sometimes it is art and art alone," she writes, "that can recreate the myth; and to do this the words must be the right words, the words of poetry" (42). This poetic quality is clearly evident in "Chapter I," and Forster uses it to reveal the intent of the novel for those with an attentive ear:

> The sky settles everything—not only climates and seasons but when the earth shall be beautiful. By herself she can do little—only feeble outbursts of flowers. But when the sky chooses, glory can rain into the Chandrapore bazaars or a benediction pass from horizon to horizon. The sky can do this because it is so strong and so enormous. Strength comes from the sun, infused in it daily; size from the prostrate earth. (5)

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[18] Richard Cammarota devotes an entire essay to the discussion of the influence of music on Forster's narrative powers (38-45).

For eloquence of prose, this passage does not differ markedly from the two paragraphs that precede it. There is, however, a subtle change in "key," a heightened sense of drama, a distinct sense that here Forster has loosed his soul. The beginning of the sequence, "The sky settles everything…" comes too abruptly after the steady flow of a score of rhythmic sentences that are just as finely wrought as those that follow but are never imposing. One pauses, is drawn to the immediate juxtaposition of sky and earth, of masculine and feminine.

There is a sadness in this passage and its subjects even as they aspire to "glory." We are aware of the imposition of masculinity on femininity, and if we consider these few sentences in the historical-mythological sense, we can too clearly see the thundering chariots of the Aryans descending on the indigenous peoples of the Indus valley. As Francis Watson points out, "The gods of the immigrant surge were elemental rather than territorial" (32). And with each immigrant surge that followed the Aryans—whether of the Moguls or of the British—the gods remained elemental, masculine, and imposing. As we have seen, however, femininity in India, certainly in symbolic terms, survived very well historically. Forster intends her no harm in Passage.

The phrase that implies that femininity can do little by herself is also disconcerting if taken at face value. The reader should sense, however, that Forster is stating a condition rather than a conviction. If there is any personal feeling in this phrase, it should be attributed to the degree of power that Forster senses in the

feminine. He sees no reason to detract from the sun, for life has identified Forster as masculine. Forster, as the novel makes clear, is fully aware of the flaws in masculinity; the sun holds little fascination for him. The feminine, however, does intrigue him and perhaps even frightens him somewhat. This fear, however, should be attributed to Forster's own search for himself rather than to the misogyny of which he is too often accused.

Again, in historical-mythological terms, regarding the ascendancy of the solar over the territorial or lunar gods and cultures, Forster clearly agrees when Stanley Wolpert states that the pre-Aryan peoples were in many ways (warfare the critical exception) more advanced than their conquerors (14). He also realizes that the same applies to the British invasion of India, only ship and cannon substituted for chariot and iron.

In a few sentences, then, Forster implicates and assimilates the entire range of human history—races, cultures, and religions—and creates a single equation the novel must solve. How does one join opposites? In solving this problem, he chooses to unite that most fundamental of divisions—femininity and masculinity. For just as this passage emphasizes divisions, it ends with hope—with a hint of balance: "Strength comes from the sun, infused in it daily; size from the prostrate earth." Avron Fleishman captures the essence of these sentences:

> This mythic account of sun and earth includes the only terms directly drawn from Indian religion; the strength from the sun, "infused" into

> a prostrate earth which "lies flat," comes as a male seed fertilizing a female, as a sun god coupling with an earth goddess in a cosmic pantheon. (116)

While India is depicted as feminine, India is not consigned to the "semantic limbo of a *female* pronoun" that Freedgood (137) recognizes. On the contrary, feminine India is dynamic, powerful, and spiritual. The critic who fixates on the feminization of India as something negative is destined to fail. The question that we must consider is, "What's wrong with being portrayed as feminine?"

If we view Passage as a novel that works toward "connecting" femininity and masculinity on a number of levels, including especially that mythological and spiritual model by which feminine-masculine union—or oneness—equates to spiritual union with god, the book opens up to a powerful new interpretation. With such a design in mind, we can revisit the first chapter and further profit.

"Except for the Marabar Caves—and they are twenty miles off—the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary" (1). Beyond foreshadowing the importance of the Marabar Caves, the opening sentence of the novel is in itself extraordinary in the manner it sets the tone for the novel. David Dowling writes of this first sentence that, "Certainly Forster rejects the binary oppositions and logic of prose, the exclusive either-or which (as Kermode has pointed out) is challenged by the very first sentence"(362). Even at the syntactical level Forster manages to blend objects that, practically speaking, should be considered distant.

Srinavasa Sastry states that Forster "invest[s] India with a personality" (189). The femininity of that personality is nowhere disputed; the question becomes whether or not the femininity of that personality is denigrated. The feminine side of India that Forster initially portrays is couched in mythical terms—terms that allow India to retain an identity for the most part untouched by the solar. As Kinsley states, "An important aspect of the reverence for the divine feminine in the Hindu tradition is an awe for the sacrality of the land itself and for the Indian subcontinent as a whole" (178). The Bhagavad Purana, with which Forster was at least familiar, clearly associates different geological formations with the divine feminine. The Ganges, prominently featured in this opening chapter, is, as Mircea Eliade points out, "the feminine energy of the universe" (485). While Sastry accurately notes that "...Forster evocatively catches the spirit of the myth of India through the happenings in the cave and the temple" (188), he also says that Forster makes a mistake when he writes in Passage that "the Ganges happens to be not holy here" (3). The Ganges, Sastry continues, is holy in all places. In this situation, Sastry has underestimated the author. Forster is fully aware that the Ganges is sacred in all places, but Chandrapore, as a symbol of the Raj's overbearing form of masculinity imposing on the landscape of the divine feminine, can only be "edged" rather than "washed" by the sacred river. Chandrapore is an unholy entity on this sacred landscape, and Forster creates distance between river and city as he does between river and caves.

The most enduring and telling feature of the landscape of the first chapter, however, occurs when the

> toddy palms and neem trees and mangoes and pepul….rise from the gardens where ancient tanks nourish them, they burst out of stifling purlieus and unconsidered temples. Seeking light and air, and endowed with more strength than man or his works, they soar above the lower deposit to greet one another with branches and beckoning leaves, and to build a city for the birds. (4)

This paragraph clearly captures the spirit of the Tree of Life, that mythical symbol fundamental, as Campbell points out in The Mythic Image (190-95), to the roots of all world religions. Campbell writes: "Now it is of the essence of the image of the [Tree of Life] that it should symbolize the way or place of passage from motion to rest, time to eternity, separation to union; but then also, conversely, rest to motion, eternity to time, unity to multiplicity" (194). In Forster's depiction, the trees act as a barrier between the bazaar and the British camp. Forster's message is that until humanity, and particularly the Raj, learns to see from multiple perspectives—with the "double vision" becoming single that Woolf talks about—we can never "climb to heaven." Forster's goal it to make it possible for all to gain access to this Tree.[19]

Through the symbolism of mythology, Forster states his intentions in this first chapter. And if this interpretation seems too imaginative, only consider Jung's

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[19] The importance and holiness of the "pepul" tree is documented in the Bhagavad-Gita (78).

words in The Secret of the Golden Flower: "the union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness is not a rational thing, nor is it a matter of will; it is a process of psychic development that expresses itself in symbols" (qtd. in Coward 18).

This thesis cannot afford an in-depth interpretation of every paragraph in the novel, but it can adequately address the issues by referring to what Herz terms "major episode[s] in the narrative sequence" (91). Regarding the first part of Passage, Mosque, Herz recognizes the "social occasions" of bridge party and tea party as major episodes. This interpretation includes these two episodes and adds Aziz's aborted dinner and his first encounter with Mrs. Moore to the mix. It then considers the "social occasions" that we find in the caves and the courtroom. These occasions provide the background necessary to explore the sense of resolution that pervades the "Temple" section of the novel.

Dinner Party

We leave the muted but promised sense of union offered in chapter 1 to find an animated Aziz entering an Islamic enclave that is decidedly patriarchal—a gathering that literally places its women in separate quarters. In the seven pages that depict this first "social gathering" of the novel, Forster begins to develop a number of themes that will become prevalent, and increasingly important, in Passage.

The first theme that becomes apparent is Forster's insistence on reversing roles—on characterizing individuals or groups with attributes that are normally reserved for their antagonists. Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali engage in the same

sort of stereotyping that both they and generations of critics will accuse the English of: "[The English] all become exactly the same, not worse, not better" (7). While this first example is slight, it is the first in a series of role reversals that become increasingly sharp and ironic and that further Forster's goal of unifying humanity, even when the sense of unity is unflattering. More importantly, Forster uses this technique to assign individuals and groups with gender traits not normally associated with them.

The first such cross-characterization comes in the next few pages when Aziz is introduced as a poet. As Benita Parry observes, Forster creates an "unmistakably Indian incarnation of Islam" (39). Parry also remarks that this incarnation is represented by "mystical Sufi tendencies" (39). At the dinner party, Aziz recites the poetry of Hafiz, Hali, and Iqbal, all of the Sufi tradition—a tradition that has much in common with Hindu mysticism.[20] In India: Mystic, Complex and Real, Ganguly documents how the Sufi philosophy spread throughout India because of its poetry. Concerning Aziz, Ganguly rightly concludes that "Both orthodox Islam and Sufism have shaped the spiritual life of Aziz" (110). Aziz, despite his often macho, anti-Hindu rhetoric, has an affinity with Hinduism, and, as will become apparent, an affinity that relates particularly to the pre-Vedic mysticism that draws heavily from the feminine principle.

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[20] Geoffrey Parrinder's World Religions: From Ancient History to the Present includes an adequate summary of the main tenets of Sufism. June Levine's Creation and Criticism: "A Passage to India," comments at length on the significance of Sufi poetry in A Passage to India. She writes:

Even though the Dinner Party is ostensibly conducted under the auspices of masculinity—the women placed in another room, the hookah as symbolic of male/female dislocation as the smoking room that is a fixture in traditional English novels—Forster has more groundwork to lay regarding the ultimate place of the feminine in his work. The next subtle but strong point Forster makes comes in the form of a question: "Wedlock, motherhood, power in the house—for what else is [woman] born…?" (11). In the masculine domain of the Islamic Dinner Party, this question, on first reading, almost passes as a statement. The perceptive reader eventually realizes, however, that the narrator of Passage troubles his reader only on a very few occasions with this type of direct interrogation. The key to Forster's message here is to understand that the question is not rhetorical and that examining the role of femininity is central to the novel.[21]

The most compelling introduction to femininity occurs just as Aziz appears most comfortable in his masculine surroundings. He coaxes the hookah, lies in a trance, and observes that it is "Delicious indeed to lie on the broad verandah with the moon rising in front of him…" (7). This first mention of the moon, however off-hand it might appear, introduces the reader to the theme of lunar or feminine wisdom and power. Its application to this thesis becomes clear on reading Campbell's

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"…[Sufi] pantheism led to the idea that the beloved and lover were identical. This notion, shared [much] with Hindu mysticism…" (56).

[21] Forster is also keenly aware of the plight of Indian woman in political terms. He twice notes that Aziz's daughter Jemila is "the third" even though she was born before her brothers. For Forster to dwell on this fact would be inconsistent with the intent of the novel. The reader should note, however, Forster's recognition of the situation.

discussion of solar and lunar symbolism in classical mythology.[22] Part of this discussion, found in Occidental Mythology, reads:

> The patriarchal point of view is distinguished from the earlier archaic view by its setting apart of all pairs-of-opposites—male and female, life and death, true and false, good and evil—as though they were absolutes in themselves and not merely aspects of the larger entity of life. This we may liken to a solar, as opposed to lunar, mythic view, since darkness flees from the sun as its opposite, but in the moon dark and light interact in the one sphere. (27)

The message of Passage is clearly not of the solar variety; Forster desires the interaction of light and dark and all apparent opposites, and the moon hints of this possibility. The moon, "rising" in this scene, grows brighter as the narrative leads us toward the Mosque. The Mosque scene, in fact, is created against a textually muted but symbolically powerful lunar backdrop.

Meeting at the Mosque

Aziz's road to the Mosque leads him past the tonga-pilfering "Mesdames Callendar and Lesley," two ladies who behave in a most unladylike manner. This brief encounter offers us an opportunity to explore further Forster's technique of cross-characterization. Forster's portrayal of women in Passage has sometimes led

[22] Campbell uses Ovid's tale of Tiresias, who had lived as both man and woman, to illustrate his point.

critics to highlight his alleged misogynist tendencies in the novel. Frances Restuccia writes that "misogyny is not only pervasive…but seems to be justified by a surplus of defective female characters" (121).

Once again, this judgment illustrates the problems inherent in critiquing a novel from a political point of view. The critic sees what he or she wants or needs to see. If we take an impartial look at Forster's characters, we see that there is no "surplus of defective female characters." Mesdames Callendar and Leslie, it is true, are not ideal characters, but they are certainly no worse than their husbands. What is true is that these women are given masculine attributes quite in keeping with Forster's determination to reveal the masculine in the feminine and vice versa.

Forster continues his androgynous characterization as Aziz, "an athletic little man, daintily put together, but really very strong," enters the Mosque. As Forster constructs the Mosque and reveals its power on Aziz, we are reminded of the extraordinary difficulties Forster faces in creating some sort of resolution in an environment fragmented by the clash of so many disparate cultures and religions. Following a scene in which some very masculine ladies treat Aziz with contempt, we are led into a scene where, by its conclusion, Aziz can postulate that it little matters "if a few flabby Hindus had preceded him there, and a few chilly English succeeded" (22).

It is remarkable that, in this short scene at the Mosque, Forster manages to create an environment in which a young Indian man and an old English woman can

both recognize that "God is here." In religious terms, the two are nearly polar opposites—Aziz representing Islam and Mrs. Moore representing the Earth or Mother Goddess. Forster's dialogue, which leads them to this shared epiphany of God's love, is carefully sprinkled across the more powerful backdrop of the religio-mythological symbolism inherent in the Mosque and the Moon.

Entering the Mosque, an edifice that—as John Dixon Hunt remarks—is in many ways as exclusive as the British club (507), Aziz encounters the "ninety-nine names of God." Here the power of the masculine God is not only presented but it is reiterated ninety-nine times. In keeping with Forster's message, however, this barrage of masculinity is subdued; it is visible, in fact, only in the light of the full moon. Nor is it the stark repetition of masculine glory that interests Aziz; on the contrary, what appeals to Aziz is the interplay between the masculine and the feminine: "The contest between this dualism and the contention of shadows within pleased Aziz, and he tried to symbolize the whole into some truth of religion of love" (16). Indeed, with Mrs. Moore, Aziz achieves just such a triumph when he recognizes the presence of her God, an entity that is clearly androgynous.

The Moon causes Aziz to romanticize Islam. On the surface, only the Mosque signifies, but the Mosque takes its meaning from the Moon: "But the mosque—that alone signified, and he returned to it from the complex appeal of the night, and decked it with meanings the builder had never intended" (17). And as

Aziz "returns" to the Mosque, he envisions another Mosque--the one he will build and be buried near in a tomb with a Persian epitaph that reads:

> Alas, without me for thousands of years
> The Rose will blossom and the Spring will bloom,
> But those who have secretly understood my heart—
> They will approach and visit the grave where I lie. (17)

Tariq Rahman writes that "The 'secret understanding of the heart' which so touches Aziz is the mystic secret for discovering the formula for attaining union with the beloved" (104). Like Forster's "poetics," this Persian "union" addresses more than the literal. Union with the "beloved," on the simplest level, equates with the touching of genders, but ultimately it represents a oneness with God (Wilson and Pourjavady 85). This physical-mystical alignment represents Forster's most profound vision of gender.

As Aziz repeats this quatrain, in something of a mantra-sayer's trance, he awakens to his surroundings to see one of the "pillars of the mosque" transform into its antithesis, Mrs. Moore, who can recognize God's presence in the Mosque but who supports something less solid but much larger. She causes a "fabric bigger than the mosque [to fall] to pieces" and Aziz to recognize that God not only comes in many names but in many forms.

As Aziz and Mrs. Moore depart from the Mosque, Forster continues to bathe his readers in moonlight. The "moon" is mentioned seven times in little more than a

page, and its repetition reinforces a sense of union where femininity certainly does not play an inferior role. Aziz strolls "downhill beneath the lovely moon, and again saw the lovely mosque…" (22), and a man in the club—with a voice that will be heard only once in the novel—makes the most of his opportunity by declaring that England and India "stick to the same old moon" (23).

Bridge Party

"Her impressions were of no interest to the Collector; he was only concerned to give her a good time. Would she like a Bridge Party? He explained to her what that was—not the game, but a party to bridge the gulf between East and West; the expression was his own invention, and amused all who heard it" (26). The Collector's Bridge Party is, of course, a game—designed to amuse the West and to manipulate the East. Small wonder, then, that its narrative begins with the stark line "The Bridge Party was not a success…" (38).

Bloom writes: "Forster, I believe, is attempting something a great deal more complex than an orientalist vision of irreconcilable differences between East and West…." (106). This opinion is as understated as Trilling's declaration concerning the universality of Passage. Quite simply, if Forster's message were concerned with "irreconcilable differences," then the novel could have ended here, at a point where the rift between East and West is plainly visible. Instead, Forster continues to explore sets of opposites—Muslim/Hindu, Brahmin/Untouchable, female/male—until he can offer us the possibility that they might somehow connect. Forster, at this point in the

novel, has presented us with a series of complex problems to solve; the remainder of the novel provides solutions.

As Horowitz leads up to her assertion that Forster's work can be profitably interpreted through the use of "myth and ritual," she writes that " The title [A Passage to India] presents an approach, emphasizing at the very onset the pivotal word 'passage.' Like A Room with a View it suggests that some people live in closed rooms but can reach out to a view beyond....the transit between one place and another—is a search for union" (71). The message of the book, then, is to be found in the search for that view, that perspective, that enables the "double vision" to become single and that frees humanity from its self-imposed confines. And out of the heavy silence of the Bridge Party gathering, Forster again resorts to the poetic to lend his readers a hand:

> There was a silence when he had finished speaking, on both sides of the court; at least, more ladies joined the English group, but their words seemed to die as soon as uttered. Some kites hovered overhead, impartial, over the kites passed the mass of a vulture, and with an impartiality exceeding all, the sky, not deeply coloured but translucent, poured light from its whole circumference. It seemed unlikely that the series stopped here. Beyond the sky must not there be something that overarches all the skies, more impartial even than

they? Beyond which again…

They spoke of *Cousin Kate.* (40)

Clearly Forster is interested in the "beyond which again" and his narrative decision to hint at rather than to define his goal reiterates the fact that neither his characters nor his readers have been adequately prepared for such a revelation. Nor should we overlook that as readers, we are brought "back to earth" by a reference to the mildly feminist play *Cousin Kate*. For Forster the political view is, simply put, a let down—a perspective that, while valid, is not adequate to the task at hand.

The Collector's Bridge Party does nothing to "bridge the gulf between East and West." As a narrative device, however, it subtly announces Forster's intent to attempt some means of passage. That "means," of course, is Forster's vision—his desire to realize the union of opposites. The only building material that supports the weight and breadth of his vision is the mythological—whereby the Apollonian and the Kaliesque can finally embrace.

In order to build such an unlikely span, however, Forster requires some cataclysmic event—some means of forcing humanity to consider what it otherwise would not consider. At the end of the Bridge Party, Fielding finds Adela gazing at the Marabar Hills and invites her to tea. The road to the Caves, and eventually to resolution, begins with the novel's next "social occasion," the Tea Party.

Tea Party

The "song of Godbole," placed at the end of the Tea Party section and requiring less than two pages, is clearly the focal point of this gathering of humanity. Before the song can be sung, however, Forster continues to articulate thematic echoes that gently guide the reader. He creates another ironic cross-characterization with the incident regarding Fielding's collar stud. Fielding has no stud and Aziz gives him his own—an action that leads Ronny to remark "and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race" (87).

Indeed, Forster's observations on race are well ahead of their time, in many ways capturing the essence of what will one day be termed Otherness—that we fear in the Other what we see of ourselves in the Other. Leading up to the Tea Party, Forster dwells at length on the consequences of Fielding's remark that " the so-called white races are really pinko-grey" (65). He also has both the Collector and Ronny cynically refer to Indians as the "Aryan Brother" (26, 38).

At the Tea Party, however, we are presented with quite a different picture when the narrator describes Godbole:

> He was elderly and wizen with a grey moustache and grey-blue eyes, and his complexion was as fair as a European's. He wore a turban that looked like pale purple macaroni, coat, waistcoat, dhoti, socks with clocks. The clocks matched the turban, and his whole appearance

> suggested harmony—as if he had reconciled the products of both East and West, mental as well as physical, and could never be discomposed. (76-77)

There is nothing cynical in this description of Godbole; Foster clearly wants the Brahmin to suggest, to some degree, that union is possible. Not only does Godbole "reconcile the products of East and West," he also represents an historical bridge between historical cultures and eras.

Das points out that Forster takes pains to make us aware that Godbole is not just a Hindu but also a Deccani Brahman (105). Wolpert notes that the Deccan constituted a cultural bridge between the Aryan (masculine) north and the Dravidian (feminine) south (99). Das believes that Forster is aware that the Deccani Brahmins represent a bridge between the Moguls and the British Raj. As proof of Forster's intent, he cites the entire conversation that occurs when Fielding announces that Godbole is coming to the Tea Party. For brevity's sake, the words of Aziz suffice to make the point: "Oho, the Deccani Brahman!....Do you know what Deccani Brahmans say? That England conquered India from them—from them, mind, and not from the Moguls. Is it not like their cheek?....Professor Godbole must be quite unlike any other Deccani Brahmans from all I can hear say. A most sincere chap" (71).

Das also quotes from Valentine Chirol's Indian Unrest, a book that, according to Ganguly (22), Forster had read. Das compares the following passage with Forster's description of Godbole:

> Every Chitpavan [Deccani Brahman] claims descent from one or other of the fourteen divinely Brahmanized barbarians, whom some believe to have been hardy Norsemen driven in their longships on to the sandy shores of what is now the Bombay Presidency. At any rate, as has been well said of them, Western daring and Eastern craft look out alike from the alert features and clear parchment skin and through the strange stone-grey eyes of the Chitpavan. (qtd. 106)

Regardless of how accurate this legend is, or to what extent Forster made use of Chirol's description, Godbole is clearly a character constructed of opposing traits; in the context of this thesis, then, he is an androgynous being. In fact, as the main Hindu character in the novel—and particularly as he exhibits some of the qualities of a mystic—Godbole should become the character to reach heroic proportions—the individual who leads us to reconciliation and salvation.

Once again, however, the complexity of Forster's novel is underscored by the fact that Godbole cannot attain heroic proportions—that he is destined to remain, to some degree, a hollow character. Although Forster has an affinity with Hinduism, he recognizes that Godbole, as a Brahmin and particularly as a Deccani Brahmin, is a member of that Hindu caste that has "for centuries, trampled underfoot millions of

human beings without the slightest remorse for our iniquity." Godbole, in historical terms, must take his place alongside Raj and Mogul as part of an oppressive social system.

Thus the genius and complexity of Forster's theme—and the integrity with which he adheres to it—create for him a dilemma of huge proportions. How does he, as author, promote the androgyny he admires in Hinduism when he has deliberately tainted his main Hindu character? Forster brilliantly resolves this dilemma by making Godbole the herald of Krishna, the one "character" in the novel who can reach heroic proportions as well as reveal the androgyny of Hinduism in terms of gender, history, and culture.

Unfortunately, the depth of Forster's message is sure to be missed by both casual reader and political critic. The sequence that introduces the Song of Krishna, though clearly the sequence on which the novel turns, is both short and subtle. Even Sara Suleri, who generally focuses her studies on the complicity between Others, misses the mark in her interpretation. The reader will benefit by reviewing Godbole's explanation of the Song followed by Suleri's view of Godbole. Godbole says:

> It was a religious song. I place myself in the position of a milkmaiden. I say to Shri Krishna, "Come! come to me only." The god refuses to come. I grew humble and say: "Do not come to me only. Multiply yourself into a hundred Krishnas, and let one go to each of my

> hundred companions, but one, O Lord of the Universe, come to me." He refuses to come. This is repeated several times.... Come, come, come, come, come, come, He neglects to come. (85)

Concerning this passage, Suleri writes: "Forster's narrative is found, and founders on, the idiom of a god who neglects to come... [providing] Forster with a refrain that he uses to envelop all the inhabitants of India, where the god neglects to come" (110).

Suleri is partially correct in noting that Forster uses this refrain to envelop all the inhabitants of India; she appears unaware, though, that this refrain envelops, in Forster's mind, the universe. Her declaration that the god neglects to come is, unfortunately, completely erroneous—a statement whose origins are impossible to discern. Surely a scholar of Suleri's standing is aware of the legend of Krishna and the milkmaids—aware of the fact that Krishna does indeed come, in both the legend and in Forster's novel.

At this critical point in the novel, Forster prepares even the reader with no knowledge of Hinduism for his message. Set in the middle of this passage is an exchange that clearly reveals the importance of Krishna to the novel. "'But He comes in some other song, I hope?' said Mrs. Moore gently. 'Oh no, he refuses to come,' repeated Godbole, perhaps not understanding her question" (85). The phrase "perhaps not understanding her question" is one of those subtle devices with which Forster both challenges and rewards his reader. In terms of the dialogue in progress,

this exchange between Mrs. Moore and Godbole adds nothing to the conversation. In terms of the overall narrative, the statement is momentous, for it leads the careful reader, even when he or she is unfamiliar with the story of Krishna, to realize that Godbole does know that the god comes. It also alerts us to the fact that Forster has singled out the god for a purpose.

The only mystery that remains concerning this passage is why Godbole cannot answer such a simple yet important question. In fact, Godbole has already given us the answer. "I grew humble and say: 'Do not come to me only. Multiply yourself into a hundred Krishnas, and let one go to each of my hundred companions…'" (85).

We are denied the presence of Krishna at this point in the novel because none of the main characters has attained the level of humility that the god demands for union. In one form or another, the characters must cry, "come, come, come, come" until the "Temple" section of the novel when the god does come and with a blessing. Before union, however, we must find humility. As both Cavilero (152) and Shahane (16-17) note, the Song of Krishna is not sung by chance. The Song disturbs the visitors, forcing them uneasily toward the Caves—that first step toward humility.

CAVES

The Caves section is broken into two major "social occasions," a picnic gone awry and a trial where humanity is packed into a courtroom. The Caves section, the

"feminine" section in this three-part novel, has an internal balance that emphasizes Forster's search for the androgynous. The natural setting of the caves hints of femininity; the courtroom speaks for the order of masculinity—an order that, by then end of the section, has been reduced to the chaotic. Certainly masculinity is a force in the Caves, but the power of femininity, and the hope for the realization of androgyny, are clearly the themes that Forster empowers in this section.

The Picnic

Despite the importance of the caves and the complexity that they add to the novel, the major themes in the section are readily explained. As the section opens, Forster again resorts to the "poetic," the only form of narrative that serves his needs. The reader who does not consider the mythological will find the first chapter of "Caves" enigmatic. The reader who understands Forster's intent will find this chapter particularly revealing.

The "Caves" section opens with the narrator philosophizing on the geology and geography of the Marabar setting: "the high places of Dravidia…are older than anything in the world….If flesh of the sun's flesh is to be touched anywhere, it is here, among the incredible antiquity of these hills" (136). Gerald Doherty regards these sentences as "tak[ing] on a textual existence in terms of absurdly self-canceling genealogical trope…" (111). In fact, these reflections are neither absurd nor self-canceling but rather represent the elemental and the territorial—the characteristics that often symbolize the male/female dichotomy. The religious overtones are

unmistakable—the earth of Mother India and the solar power of generations of invaders.

Even the Himalayas, seat of the Hindu gods, are young in comparison to Dravidia, and as the mountains have risen, "…India, the primal, has been depressed…" (136). This poetic survey of the landscape of the Marabar leaves us with a sense of masculine encroachment on the feminine terrain. Such an invasion, however, does not equate to rape as the contemporary postcolonial critic defines that act.

In Hindu Goddesses, Kinsley points out that unusual geographical sites—and particularly caves, rivers, hills, and mountains—"are often affirmed to be places where one may make contact with the divine" (184). These sacred places, Kinsley also remarks, become "the object of the pilgrim" (184). In Passage, although the walk from the rail line to the caves is of no great physical distance, arrival at this site constitutes a pilgrimage for many of the novel's characters. In this novel, and perhaps in all instances, reconciliation without revelation is not possible.

As Forster marches us toward "the event" that changes the course of the novel, he continues to echo the multi-layered themes of his masterpiece. Even as we leave the train we are greeted by an elephant, a creature that Adela despises as emblematic of the Raj and that, in a few pages, Aziz will equate with the Mogul invasion of India—a sequence of echoes underscoring the shared "masculinity" of Aziz with his oppressors.

And this sense of shared masculinity occurs again when the party camps below the caves. Aziz sounds yet another Forsterian echo when he elaborates, as he did in the Mosque section, on the Mogul emperors. He prefers the warriors Alamgir and Babur to the mystic Akbar because the latter is "half a Hindu…not a true Moslem" (160). Forster's personal views about the Moguls are voiced through Adela: "But wasn't Akbar's new religion very fine? It was to embrace the whole of India" (160). Forster considers Akbar enlightened, but Aziz, though with his own Sufi (feminine) tendencies, cannot yet accept the possibility of the universal. In Temple, the section of reconciliation, we will see a very different Aziz.

Adela, for her part, recognizes the need for the universal at the same time that she realizes she does not love the man she has agreed to marry. A female character, she betrays femininity: "So she tried to find comfort by reflecting that her main interest would henceforward by Ronny" (147).

Mrs. Moore and Godbole, the strongest bridges between East and West, also fail at this point in the novel. Mrs. Moore's strength wanes and her spirituality takes a negative turn and she does not "want to communicate with anyone, not even with God" (166). Godbole, as the herald of Krishna, has left the company "lost in [India]" (156). His absence, we should note, is due to his valuing orthodox Brahmanism over his feelings for Aziz.

And while all of Forster's characters have both masculine and feminine attributes, not one of them has yet achieved balance or even the desire to explore his

or her own androgyny. Clearly they need to search their souls, and the caves will provide the impetus for them to do just that. So we arrive at the critical questions: What are the Caves and what happens in them?

The landscape of the Marabar, like Forster's characters, includes masculine and feminine attributes. For many critics, the caves are a feminine force. Frances Restuccia writes:

> A Passage to India, then, depicts as female that force which disrupts phallocentric representation and Western patriarchal values. Forster seems to conceive of this assault on British imperialist certainties as a "woman-in-effect," staging it in a cave with a womblike shape and a womblike sound, as "boum," "bou-oum," and ou-boum" approximate "womb." (124)

This view of the Caves as female is correct but incomplete. First, "female" is not synonymous with "feminine." More importantly, Restuccia's argument centers on the most obvious level of textual discourse found in the novel—the fact that Forster was making an "assault on British imperialist certainties." Forster's assault, at the deepest level, is an assault on the existence of opposites as opposed to the existence of the androgynous. In order for the androgynous ideal to reach its full potential, however, femininity and masculinity must have equal representation. Is feminine India, particularly as represented by the Caves, empowered or denigrated? Wilfred Stone captures the essence of Forster's intent concerning the Caves:

> In Hindu mythology the caves represent the 'womb of the universe', from which, by some miracle of androgynous fertilization, emanated all the forms of created life; first appeared a feminine principle (moon), then a masculine (sun), then the progeny resulting from the rape of the female by her offspring. There are many varieties of the myth, but basic to them all is the identification of caves with some primordial, prehistoric nothingness from which life emerged. (20)[23]

Clearly Forster empowers femininity, and while, in the myth, the female is raped, Forster is aware that the application of the word "rape" is a human, even political, construct. Forster is concerned with mystery, not the human prose that so inadequately attempts to define it. And the Caves represent that mystery that, in one form or another, should happen to us all. To insist that any specific action occurred in the Caves is to disavow the mystery, the spirituality, that the novel intends to reveal to the reader. To claim that a rape occurred in the Caves is to stand up for order, a masculine trait. The Caves, in many ways, are the litmus test of the reader's heart. What we discover in them is what we are. Forster clearly does not wish us to find the political.

Even as the Caves section reveals feminine power, Forster foreshadows the balance of the Temple section by skillfully echoing the masculine theme. As Heath

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[23] Ganguly elaborates further on the nature of the Marabar: "In sum, the Marabar Hills and their caves project some of the author's own most vivid experiences in India. Like the Vedantists, Forster realizes that there is a 'primal nature' and a timeless primal spirit without attributes, known to

remarks, a number of critics "have declared that the hills that contain the caves have 'phallic energy'" (298). Indeed, the "fists and fingers" that rise from the feminine terrain are masculine and consequently this "extraordinary" Marabar landscape ultimately represents the body androgynous. This body Marabar, potentially sacred, is sadly out of balance. Forster's characters, in paying this landscape reluctant homage, remind the reader of the three sexes of Aristophanes's allegory that assault the gods. For their disrespect, Zeus splits each of the three sexes in two. While the sexes are forever destined to yearn for their lost halves, there can be no question of rape should they meet. What Aristophanes declares for the sundered sexes holds true for Forster's metaphorical male/female. "For the intense yearning which each of them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of intercourse, but of something else which the soul desires and can not tell...." (Plato 17). There can be no rape on this landscape, but the sheer power of its mystery results in temporary chaos. Adela ravages herself in her blind rush through the cacti, and Aziz is escorted into another sort of hell. The sense of separation is overwhelming, but even here Forster's promise of union does not entirely die.

The perceptive reader understands that the possibility of reconciliation has been present throughout this entire sequence. Indeed, the enduring symbol of the Caves section appears at the conclusion of the "verses" that introduce the Picnic. Once again Forster provides his readers with a clue to his intent when we first enter

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the Indian Seers as *Brahman*. *Brahman* is Impersonal and Neuter and manifests Itself both in creation and destruction..." (151).

the Marabar: "The boulder because of its hollowness sways in the wind, and even moves when a crow perches upon it: hence its name and the name of its stupendous pedestal: the Kawa Dol" (138). In Forster's vision the masculine and the feminine become one.[24] The image of the feminine boulder swaying on the masculine pedestal certainly indicates a most precarious balance, as it must at this point in the novel. Forster's emphasis, however, is clearly not on the masculine and feminine as opposites but rather on the point where they touch. The Marabar, as catalyst, enables Forster's characters to hope for union in a divisive world.

Trial

> In contrast to the caves, the courtroom is entirely a human creation; it is the space of logic and language. What happens in the darkness of the former is scrutinized in the light of the latter. It is never really brought to light, however, for even though the courtroom is the domain of the rational, it is not entirely cut off from the mysterious or the magical. The two apparently opposed narrative sites, caves and courtroom, exist in an interestingly parallel and reciprocal relationship with one another. (Herz 103)

Herz accurately assesses the relationship between caves and courtroom. This thesis contends that the reciprocal nature of this relationship is consistent with Forster's

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[24] Forster made heavy use of personal experiences in India. He rarely alters the experience. In the case of the Kawa Dol, Forster not only resurrects the boulder, which had fallen before he visited the caves, he also engendered the boulder by making it hollow in the novel (Furbank 248).

overall narrative design—a construct that deliberately moves from the masculine to the feminine to the androgynous while at the same time finding the masculine in the feminine and vice versa.

Again, this structural design is consistently reinforced by the thematic echoes of Forster's narrative. In the pages leading up to the trial, Forster bombards the reader with a series of role reversals, sometimes within characters, sometimes between characters and/or cultures. Forster challenges our sense of perception, leading us toward the courtroom scene where freedom or imprisonment depends on perception.

Following the occurrences at the caves, we see the masculine Raj exhibit feminine characteristics: "[Fielding] was still after facts, though the herd had decided on emotion. Nothing enraged Anglo-India more than the lantern of reason if it is exhibited for one moment after its extinction is decreed" (183). Concerning this passage, Elaine Freedgood writes that "With this charge of hysteria, Forster calls into question the very masculinity of the colonizers, who ought to be rational and manly, rather than emotional and "feminine"—the role given by the British to the colonized of both genders" (128).

While, in the opinion of this thesis, Freedgood grossly misinterprets Forster's purpose in feminizing the Raj,[25] she does well to point out that the British

[25] In "E.M. Forster's Queer Nation: Taking the Closet to the Colony in A Passage to India," Freedgood means to prove that "India becomes a potential site for an eroticized and Orientalized all-male utopia" (123).

acquire and display traits that they would never recognize in themselves. Mrs. Turton, on the other hand, displays decidedly masculine qualities when she calls the men "weak." Forster equates her with "Pallas Athene," significantly the goddess born of no mother, whose womb was the head of Zeus" (Hamilton 29).

Leading up to the trial, McBryde theorizes on "climatic zones" (184) and the inherent immorality of the Indian. Post-trial, his own indiscretions with Miss Derek make him guilty of what he would pass judgment on. The subaltern, having seen Aziz from one perspective, applauds Aziz the polo player and condemns Aziz the perceived criminal, a man who, in the subaltern's mind, he has never met.

In short, Forster continuously reinforces the theme that opposites share much more than their superficial attributes would suggest. Good and evil, as Godbole suggests, are the same: "When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the universe. Similarly when good appears" (197). And while the ever-rational Fielding cannot accept such an equation, Forster is clearly intrigued by the facet of Hindu philosophy that can find good in evil, male in female, and Otherness in its antithesis.

The proceedings in the courtroom confirm Herz's assertion that the "mysterious or the magical" exist in the "domain of the rational." Furthermore, Herz's assertion reinforces Forster's theme that opposites exist in each other. Aziz and Adela—and as an extension of them, humanity—are offered reprieve by a pair of mysterious beings—a "god" and a "goddess" who are clearly androgynous. Frederick McDowell's thoughts on these beings are pertinent to this thesis.

> The punkah wallah (fan attendant) at the trial is a symbol of India's natural vitality. Under his impassive influence Adela becomes aware of more than her own sufferings and is receptive to the double vision which awakens in her when the crowd outside the court chants its version of Mrs. Moore's name, "Esmiss Esmoor." (McDowell 119)

McDowell views the punkah wallah as "an emblem of primitive strength" (119)—an emblem that, particularly as the punkah wallah is an untouchable, can only be equated with the feminine. Certainly, on the physical level, he is a "god," but at the same time he is a "male fate," or male/female as Forster equated the original for this character with Atropos (Furbank 252).

Mrs. Moore's androgyny is evident on the east/west level. Ellin Horowitz writes that "The figure of English lay-Hindu goddess is, in itself, a yoking of opposition, a passage between East and West" (77). Barbara Rosecrance writes that Mrs. Moore "...has been closest of any western character to the Hindu identification of divine love with all matter....Now summoned by the Indian populace, she 'comes' to rescue her friend" (78).

Where Rosecrance finds affinity between Mrs. Moore and the androgynous Krishna, McDowell equates Adela's double vision with the Bloomsbury ideal of seeing through the eyes of both genders or "bridg[ing] the extremities of existence" (107). Significantly, Adela's "breakdown" occurs only seconds after she imagines

the Kawa Dol, "The most wonderfully shaped of those hills"—where masculinity and femininity stand in tenuous balance.

And so, in this book of unlikely heroes, Adela becomes, in the traditional view of the word, the only hero in the novel. More importantly, her fleeting glimpse of the "double vision" becoming single forces the narrative to continue where a lesser novel would have ended. The final section of Passage enables Forster to develop a hero or two in a less traditional sense.

TEMPLE

"Temple" is about union, and the narrative—powered by the fusion of echoes into one clear, strong voice—moves quickly and thoroughly toward that end. "Temple" is so replete with instances of resolution that this paper cannot begin to attempt a comprehensive analysis of them. In keeping with our reading of "Mosque" and "Caves," we will examine "Temple" by discussing the section's "social occasions." These social occasions are not defined as in the preceding two sections, but they provide thematic support that is every bit as compelling.

The Birth of Krishna

Despite Suleri's assertion that for Forster the gods do not come in India, the action in this final, critical part of the novel revolves around the festival of Krishna, an event with implications that reverberate throughout the entire section. Concerning "Temple" Sastry writes, "The spirit of Krishna pervades it all, the spirit

of Love" (189). Nor does Krishna come alone, for the chant "Radhakrishna Radhakrishna," affirms that his consort has joined him, expressing, as K.J. Phillips remarks, Forster's "desire to make connections....for sexual union and for divine comfort—that he approves in Walt Whitman's poem...." (126). The rebirth of Krishna—one of mythology's most powerful and androgynous beings, blesses the movement toward union.

The Krishna festival depicted in Passage was based on a real-life experience of Forster that he called "the strangest and strongest Indian experience ever granted me" (qtd. in Robin Lewis, E.M. 93). Despite the power of that Hindu experience, the festival reminded him of both an Adonis festival (The Hill of Devi 71) and of the birth of Christ. Brander notes that Forster stresses the similarities between the birth of Christ and the birth of Krishna (189), a device quite in keeping with Forster's enduring efforts to find common traits in what are often perceived as diverse entities. The festival "reunites" Godbole and Mrs. Moore, and in the chant "Radhakrishna, Radhakrishna," Aziz believes that he hears "the syllables of salvation that had sounded during his trial at Chandrapore" (352). Krishna frees Forster's characters from their pasts and from their misperceptions. "Infinite Love," writes Forster in his novel, "took upon itself the form of SHRI KRISHNA, and saved the world" (322).

Walk to the Shrine

When Aziz and his children visit the Shrine of the Head, they encounter a group of prisoners, one of whom will be freed in homage to Krishna. While such an

event attests to the power of Krishna on both a literal and symbolic level, the historical circumstances surrounding this release add to this thesis.

When the prisoner is released, the average reader will designate the prisoner "masculine." In narrative terms, however, the prisoner is gender neutral. The prisoner is nowhere referred to by a gender-specific pronoun. Historically, as Forster records in The Hill of Devi, the prisoner was a woman who had murdered her husband (169). An author intent on denigrating the feminine would certainly have made use of such an event. An author intent on creating a sense of union could not afford to adhere to the truth, for the mention of spousal murder rarely creates a mood of reconciliation. Hence, "the prisoner" becomes androgynous, a symbol of humanity released.

As revealing as this instance is, it is no more important than Aziz's acceptance of the Shrines of the Head and Body. When he first arrives in Mau, Aziz finds that the Shrines are worshiped by Hindus and Muslims alike. Aziz "found that even Islam was idolatrous, he grew scornful, and longed to purify the place, like Alamgir. But soon he didn't mind, like Akbar" (332). In this final section of the novel, Aziz's acceptance of Sufism over orthodox Islam firmly supports Forster's theme of inclusion. With his acceptance of the "idolatrous," Aziz has freed himself, in Forster's mind, from an unbalanced, overly masculine view of the universe.

Baptism

Krishna reborn gives hope to humanity, and Forster brings his blessing to the Universe through Baptism in the lake. At a point in the novel when Hindu, Muslim, and Christian should have little chance of meeting, Forster brings all parties together in one of the tanks of Mau. Not only does he bring them together, he manages to partially immerse the major characters at a moment of religious ecstasy. Leland Monk's insights require little further interpretation:

> This scene is indeed the climax of Forster's Indian novel; and it is a moment of remarkable self-reflection....All characters present and accounted for. English, Moslem, and Hindu meet and mingle in this moment of aqueous fusion and confusion, Forster's fantasy of his fictional world coming together with the racial, cultural, and sexual Other that is India. This is as close as Forster's work gets to a narrative version of the Hindu religion's mutually *in*clusive sense of Being and non-Being as the Hindu and the novelistic emblems of Passage float and mingle in the dark water. (399-400)

The birth of Krishna results in a universal baptism. And these two "sacraments" or "life events" lead to the possibility of a third—quite in keeping with the universal religio-spiritual overtones that pervade the novel.

Marriage

Although no traditional nuptial is celebrated in "Temple," marriage as a symbol of union—of both "the soul with god" and of man and woman—is a powerful theme in Passage and particularly in its closing pages. The marriage of Fielding and Stella has quite rightly generated discussion, and not surprisingly much of that discussion has been politically motivated. As with many social issues the novel raises, examines, and manipulates, critical discourse on the marriage of Fielding and Stella echoes, for the most part, the fashion of the day. Herz again provides valuable historical reference in terms of evolving critical perspective:

> Bonnie Finkelstein's Forster's Women: Eternal Differences (1975) was the first to raise feminist issues in a sustained way. Unlike several more recent critics, she argued for Forster's intellectual sympathy with feminism and saw Fielding's marriage as aligning him with Mrs. Moore as a redemptive force. However, Elaine Showalter in an article two years later argued that the marriage was a betrayal both of Aziz and of the idea of interracial love as a solution to international conflicts. (41)

In fact, Fielding's marriage to Stella can in no way be a betrayal of Aziz, unless one subscribes to the theory that the novel is chiefly a work about homosexuality. That Fielding and Aziz can agree to disagree in the novel's concluding pages simply

means that, at last, they are truly friends. And the Friend, in Sufi philosophy, equates to God, hinting at possibilities that go far beyond human institutions.

In his 1994 work Culture and Imperialism, Said contends that Passage "returns to a traditional sense of social propriety in its last section, where the author deliberately and affirmatively imports into India the habitual novelistic domestic resolution (marriage and property)… " (200). Said is obviously disappointed in this type of resolution. For him, it marks Forster's failure to break from the mold of the traditional English novel—a mold, in Said's mind at least, to a degree necessarily complicit with British Imperialism. The failure, however, lies not with Forster but with Said's inability or unwillingness to recognize the full meaning of the novel's portrayal of "domestic resolution."

Herz, in exploring Passage through an analysis of social encounters, a method this thesis borrows from, says that Forster likely borrowed from Jane Austen's Emma. This theory is entirely plausible, and, in accepting its probability,[26] we can discern much about Forster's approach to the matrimony of Fielding and Stella. In Emma we see a spirited, intelligent, and strong-willed young woman come, by slow degrees, to recognize that she has always admired the steady, very traditional qualities of Mr. Knightley. While there is certainly a strong element of friendship and respect—a sense of enlightened union considering the novel's era—between Emma and Mr. Knightley, the emphasis in this union nonetheless lies clearly in the

[26] In the essay "Jane Austin," Forster writes: "I am a Jane Austenite….She is my favorite author!

subjugation of the feminine to the masculine. For Emma ultimately accepts as ennobling everything that the traditional English gentleman stands for and consequently the core of what it means to be British.

Fielding and Stella's marriage in Passage is quite another matter. While Fielding and Stella's marriage also appears enlightened for its time, there is little hint of a feminine dependency on the masculine, and this despite the fact that the marriage is a product of the Raj. Rather, Fielding is aware that the strength of his feelings for Stella exceeds that of hers for him. The sense of dependency is reversed from that found in Emma, and this despite the fact that Emma, in terms of economics, is far better situated to be independent. Given Forster's loyalty to Austin's prescription for the social occasion, this role reversal—a common theme throughout the novel—should be attributed to more than chance.

Furthermore, Forster makes it clear that Stella's strength arises from something far deeper than traditional symbols of status. Forster, through Fielding, leaves little doubt as to the power of Stella's role: "When I'm with her, I suppose because I'm fond of her, I feel half dead and half blind. My wife's after something. You and I and Miss Quested are, roughly speaking, not after anything. We jog on as decently as we can, you a little in front—a laudable little party. But my wife is not with us" (357). While it does Fielding credit to recognize his own shortcomings, this tribute to Stella reveals something far deeper than Fielding's honesty. It highlights Stella and Forster's attraction to "…Hinduism…[without]…its forms" (359). Thus

through this offspring of Mrs. Moore, virtually all the characters in the novel are finally tied together in one universal reality where success is not promised but where hope flickers behind the shadows. As the birth of Krishna creates a "link" between Fielding and Stella (357), so it creates a fragile bridge by which, should characters or readers dare cross, Otherness can embrace Otherness.

In Herz's earlier citation from Showalter's article, Herz uses Showalter's "betrayal" theory as a non-critical example of the range of opinion regarding the marriage of Fielding and Stella. While this thesis has pointed out the fallacy of that betrayal theory, it also notes that, in the end, and in that same article, Showalter concludes her views with a very different sentiment—one that is a credit to both Showalter and to Forster's novel.

> Fielding's marriage, on the other hand, is a role which holds out the promise of a new generation....The hope of Fielding's marriage is that the negative aspects of the family—its possessiveness, its patterns of mastery and submission—will be cancelled by the mixture of the urbane and rational Fielding strain with the sympathetic and mystical Moore strain. The descendants of the Fieldings and the Moores may evolve spiritually beyond their parents. (14)

CONCLUSION

In her novel The Lover, Marguerite Duras writes against the backdrop of French imperialism in Indo-China. Her narrative reaches, as well, into the pain of post-World War II Europe where she compares Nazi collaborators with the French Communist Party. In what must be one of the more startling statements in French literature, she declares that Collaboration and Communism, in their historical context polar opposites, are one and the same thing. She writes: "Collaborators, the Fenandezes were. And I, two years after the war, I was a member of the French Communist Party. The parallel is complete and absolute" (68). While such a statement would initially appear to have little connection with Forster—and to the politically motivated critic even less connection with reality—anyone familiar with Eastern philosophy, the Imperialist setting of The Lover, and Duras's biography might well consider that her long stay in the East prepared her to make such an unlikely statement. Equating opposites, particularly political opposites, with each other is a mental exercise that runs counter to Western modes of thought. This means of perception, shared by both Duras and Forster, upsets our notions about what is good and evil, right and wrong, or East and West. Duras concludes her remarkable utterance with a few sentences that capture the essence of Forster's motivation in writing Passage. Of Collaborators and Communists, of opposites, Duras continues: "The two things are the same, the same pity, the same call for help, the same lack of judgment, the same superstition, if you like, that consists in

believing in a political solution to the personal problem" (68). Duras and Forster, likely due to their mutual exposure to the East, share a sentiment that transcends class, nationality, and gender—a sentiment that exposes the limited ability of the political to achieve an honest, deep, and lasting solution to the human predicament. Such a solution, both authors maintain, comes from the individual's willingness to recognize and ability to accept the Other in him- or herself where the political can only accentuate differences.

As Said wisely points out "such locales, regions, geographical sections as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made" (Orientalism 5). Forster would not only agree with this statement, he would also add that "patriarchal" and "feminist," "colonialist" and "post-colonialist" are also human creations, well intentioned descriptors that eventually lose their value as they enter the ranks of empty political nomenclature—as pawns in those wars of words that critics with an agenda love to engage in.

On one of its less sophisticated levels, Forster's work is certainly a criticism of the Raj. On a deeper—but still fairly unsophisticated level—Forster's masterpiece is an assault on the rhetoric of "antagonistic principles." In many ways, the novel criticizes those who foster the culture of Otherness—of accentuating differences—a model that literary critics are certainly prone to adopt. While it might initially appear frivolous to compare the British Raj with the institution of literary criticism, the parallels invite discussion.

While this study has no desire to diminish the gravity of rape in any way, its use as a metaphor is pertinent to this thesis. Not only does a good deal of contemporary criticism on Passage center on the rape in the caves, but the metaphor of rape, as we have seen, has been used by Said and others to represent the West's treatment of the East. In comparing the Raj with literary criticism, we must ask: "Can a text be raped?"

In the socially acceptable terms of contemporary society, the line between an "act of love" and rape hinges on the concept of "consent," creating, in philosophical terms, a very fine line indeed to tread. As rape is rightly branded an act of hatred, "consent," in itself, cannot automatically remove that hatred. Even with "consent," the body remains to some degree rapeable should the "transgressor" act with motives that are less than pure. While no human being nor any legal body created by humanity possesses the moral scale to define the balance accurately between love and hate, it is clear that the concept of "intent" must, on some level, be added to the criteria that define rape. A definition of rape that includes the criterion of "intent" becomes particularly meaningful when we extend the metaphor from the human body to bodies that remain voiceless, where "consent" becomes a matter of speculation rather than of articulation. Such voiceless bodies include the land and, in this metaphor, the textual body.

Many women and some men long remain silent after suffering an act of rape, but articulation, however painful, is an option and one that is fortunately and

increasingly chosen. The land, as a metaphorical rapeable entity, can voice its pain in time, ravaging as it was ravaged, through drought, blight, wind, and flood. The textual body, however, remains silent—era after era as vulnerable as the day it was first read—open to whoever wishes to enter it. Even though it might in time be defended, the text, in itself, cannot respond to an attack; to respect a text or to rape a text, then, depends solely on the intent of the reader as critic.

The rape of the virgin, the image of innocence destroyed, whether of the human body or of the landscape, is a universal human metaphor. The desire to rush unfettered over untouched territory is not clearly bounded by the artificial designations of "race, class, and gender." This need to pillage for personal gain is not limited to foot soldiers nor to land barons; this need exhibits itself in every level and every category of every society.

Considering the textual body, when a new school of criticism opens its doors, the body is re-hymenized by opening the text to, allegedly, a completely new way of interpretation. Not only rape, but also virgin rape, becomes possible in such a circumstance in which the desire to be first can overcome more balanced and worthy human instincts. The political critic, agenda in hand, has not the ability to approach the text in a balanced manner. The text is forced to submit to pre-designed needs and ravishment, depending on the strength of those needs, can be complete.

In The Uses of Literature, Italo Calvino remarks that it is acceptable to use literature as a political tool if the reason behind that use is to "give a voice to

whatever is without a voice…especially to what the language of politics excludes or attempts to exclude" (98). While such an explanation is not only acceptable but laudable, it still requires that we consider intent and that at least ask the question: "Who is the critic defending—the voiceless or his or her own position within the critical community (perhaps even the right to a tenure-track position)?" As critics, we too often examine the motives of others without examining our own. The rhetoric of post-colonial criticism too often contains the same type of hollow moral jingoism on which the British Raj attempted to justify its "salvation of the natives." The result, as Brydon writes, has been disheartening:

> Our discipline is now spending so much time critiquing colonialist discourse that the genuinely new directions implicit in the study of new literatures in English are being neglected. For an alternative organization of knowledge we must look beyond reactions against what we have inherited toward new starting points. Deconstructing imperialism keeps us within imperialism's orbit. (23)

While we cannot favorably compare the Raj to the individual critic, we can perhaps favorably compare the individual British imperialist foot soldier to the individual contemporary political critic. Most of the former had far fewer options than most of the latter. As critics, we can all be guilty of rape by intent—perhaps the worst form of rape. Calvino's conclusions on motive or intent provide a fitting end to this sequence on critical culpability.

> When we become aware of our disease or of our hidden motives, we have already begun to get the better of them. What matters is the way in which we accept our motive and live through the ensuing crisis. This is the only chance we have of becoming different from the way we are—that is, the only way of starting to invent a new way of being. (100)

Inventing "a new way of being" out of a chaotic and troubled universe is at the core of the deepest message of Forster's greatest novel. The political critic is not intent on finding "a new way of being" but rather in struggling against an old way of being. The result must always be unsatisfactory, must always fail to consider, let alone reach, the possibilities for human growth. To summarize the dilemma of political criticism, this thesis will quote at length, and eventually analyze, a passage from "The Prisonhouse of Orientalism," in which Zakia Pathak, Saswati Sengupta, and Sharmila Purkayastha critique the collection of essays found in Focus on Forster's "A Passage to India." The essays critiqued are by Indian critics and are introduced by their authors as the "genuine" Indian response rather than "fake" responses that, among other issues, rely on "patterns of common heritages…" (qtd. in Pathak et al 199). The analysis will expose the shortcomings of both Pathak and those she criticizes, as all of them write from a set, political agenda:

> What becomes clear on reading the essays, however, is that the difference rests simply on the insertion of *Indian* philosophy, more

> particularly the Bhakta philosophy, into the spiritual dimension. The crucial concern is still with the metaphysical. Post-Said, these essays can be read as emanating from a colonized consciousness. Published almost thirty years after the British imperial presence had been removed from India, they have not broken out of the paradigm of interpretation legitimized by western critics. Indeed they are complicit with Orientalist discourse. First, they subordinate the political story to the philosophy. Nageswar Rao goes so far as to say that the novel is not about race relations at all but about "fundamental experience" and is "symbolic of the contemporary situation." Second, they implicitly glorify the golden past of India's history while resolutely looking away from the ugliness of the contemporary reality of colonial subjection. The uncritical boast that on the spiritual plane India can regenerate the west, that Hinduism made Forster aware of the gap in Christianity and gave promise of hope in a nihilistic world, is complicit with imperialist interests. Third, none of the writers disputes the claim of the white man to speak for the natives. "Whether Forster speaks of Hindus or Muslims he gets into their hearts…the sheer authenticity of the dialogue is staggering." (199)

A critique of Pathak's critique reveals lack of depth in both her analysis and in the text she analyzes. A Passage to India is, above all, a metaphysical text, and to

ignore that premise, evident not only in the work itself but also through the declared intent of its author, is to limit severely one's interaction with the novel. Again, such a statement does not destroy the validity of a political reading, but it does place a limit on the value of such a reading. Not to consider the emotional and intellectual base from which the author writes is to assume complete ownership of the text, opening the critic to the possibility of rape by intent.[27] Furthermore, if we accept the validity of Brydon's statements, Pathak, writing not almost thirty but almost forty-five years after the departure of the British Imperialist presence, still remains "within imperialism's orbit."

To discuss the three specific points that apparently most trouble Pathak, first of all, the political story is indeed the subordinate story and no reader but the political critic would have need to elevate it beyond the "poetic, philosophic" story of the novel.

Second, while the essays in question might erroneously "glorify the golden past of India's history," Forster certainly does not. Consequently, both Pathak and the authors of these essays are limited by their political agendas. Forster's view of India's past is by no means complimentary. In fact, he recognizes in those historical

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[27] As an aside, but a pertinent aside, Calvino adds to the discussion in The Uses of Literature. He writes: "If at one time literature was regarded as a mirror held up to the world, or as the direct expression of feelings, now we can no longer neglect the fact that books are made of words, of signs, of methods of construction. We can never forget that what books communicate often remains unknown even to the author himself, that books often say something different from what they set out to say, that in any book there is a part that is the author's and a part that is a collective and anonymous work. This kind of awareness does not influence literature alone: it can also be useful to politics, *topos*. Politics, like literature, must above all know itself and distrust itself. "

achievements the same imperialistic tendencies that he recognizes in the Raj. While we can say that Forster uses India's past to present a microcosm of the Universe, we must equally recognize that, in manipulating mythological archetypes, Forster equates that past with the universal human condition. While it is true that Forster's study of Hinduism made him more keenly aware of what he already sensed—that Christianity contained gaps—it is not true that Forster felt that Hinduism could regenerate the West. Forster was not interested in Hinduism as a structured religion. Rather, the essence of Hinduism—its inclusiveness and its presentation of endless possibilities for reaching out to a supreme principle masked in many faces, including feminine faces—appealed to him.

Third, as for the right of the "white man to speak for the native," that action is not only a right but a duty, just as it is Pathak's right and duty to speak for and of whatever is her Other. For it is only through such discourse that the human race, of whatever ethnicity, class, or gender, can hope by small degrees to arrive at some meaningful level of communication. To say that the white man cannot speak for the native—or the Other for the Other—is to deny the native to speak for the white man. This denial is nothing short of a denigration of the oral traditions of much of the earth's populace that pulses so vibrantly from hearth to hearth in the remote reaches of the world. This denial necessarily subordinates the oral to the written word; it

devalues that speech that does not adhere to academic rhetoric in every institution, whether of East or of West, of "higher learning" on the planet.[28]

Speaking of and for the Other is a responsibility, and the criteria for judging the validity of that speech resides not so much in terms of content as it does in terms of intent. As a group of societies, we must particularly rely on our poets to speak as loudly and fearlessly as they might dare. For ultimately such speech is the offspring of that which is creative rather than that which is critical, and, in this, we can take hope. This postulate is eloquently supported by Bharati Mukherjee, a fearless poet in her own right, as she pays tribute to Forster: "The wonder in reading Forster was that forty years before, he had written about a society I thought I could still recognize" (qtd. in Herz 32). Not surprisingly, Mukherjee was herself criticized by the Western feminist movement for presenting, much as Forster does, the power of femininity through a construct that does not meet the proper political criteria (Mukherjee 22).

Forster's text, like Mukerjee's, lives on, defying the political initiatives of each passing era. His search for union—of East and West, of masculinity and femininity, of all opposites, is as vibrant today as the day he capped his pen on A

[28] In the "Introduction" of this thesis, we saw that "the contemporary Western critical insistence that to feminize is to denigrate is, in fact, to some measure complicit with what it purports to oppose." Here Pathak expresses a parallel sentiment by implying that only texts written by whites (or those within the Western academic sphere) have power. Not only does such an assumption take for granted texts written in languages other than English, it completely ignores the value of the thoughts of hundreds of millions of human beings who communicate almost exclusively through the spoken word. Anyone who has spent any time with these verbally oriented people knows that they can be just as brilliant or just as prejudiced as any Westerner committing his or her thoughts to paper. To imply anything else is to be guilty of Orientalism.

Passage to India. In the end, he gives hope for the androgynous being, for those who can recognize, respect, and embrace the Otherness in themselves. As a final critical reference, this study turns to Carolyn Heilbrun's Toward a Recognition of Androgyny—to a passage that is both sympathetic to and a summary of the Forsterian attempt to introduce a "new way of being."

> Thinking about profound social change, conservatives always expect disaster, while revolutionaries confidently anticipate utopia. Both are wrong. But in the end, I am convinced, the future lies with those who believe salvation likelier to spring from the imagination of possibility than from the delineation of the historical. (X)

The delineation of the historical can certainly remind us of past mistakes. Such a reminder, however, in no way guarantees that we will not repeat those mistakes. That point of balance where conservatives and revolutionaries—and all pairs of opposites—could meet is where Forster would have us find salvation.

The disheartening aspect of a good deal of contemporary criticism on A Passage to India is that it is not what it purports to be. It is not an enlightened response to injustice and ignorance but rather merely a new slant on the timeless human tendency to seek out divisions rather than to explore common ground. In the end we see that Forster's masterpiece rises above such partisan discourse, and, while it never allows us to realize perfection, it guides us a good ways up that Tree of Life—that mythological bridge between "earth and heaven" where we become one

with that which we are not—so eloquently and powerfully depicted in the early pages of the novel. And while Forster cannot take us all the way across that bridge, he leaves us, indeed swaying rather precariously, with the next branch clearly marked for those who would dare the passage.

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